IS IT A A ENOUGH?

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"ALL THE THINGS I CANNOT SPEAK I WILL TELL YOU.
SHUT YOUR EYES AND LISTEN"

A ROMANCE OF MUSICAL LIFE

BY
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CHAPTER I

THERE were never many passengers on the 11.23 from Boston, and on the particular morning in August with which we are concerned there were only three. The first to get off was an old lady whose relief at the sight of a bustling young woman, evidently there to meet her, was pretty to see. The second was a spruce clerical person who knew so well what he was about that he subdued rather than excited curiosity. The third was a man.

Mr. Hiram, who transported luggage for a living to and from the station, had watched the first two descend and go on their way without rousing himself from his habitual attitude on the seat of his wagon, the reins caught in the crook of his left arm, one leg over the arm of the seat, and his right hand free for the regular removal and replacing of his clay pipe, as he watched over his shoulder for a likely customer. But 'when the third passenger reached the gravel platform and paused there, Mr. Hiram

sat up, swung both legs about over the low back of his driving-box, took his pipe from his mouth, and whistled. As so much exertion betrayed an unusual and striking degree of interest, it may be supposed that there was something uncommon to Beverly, Maine, in the appearance of the stranger.

He was, at first sight, a peculiar figure enough for a New England town; even for a town which was beginning to wake to new movements, to acquire a utilitarian ugliness and a veneer of prosperity which replaced the untroubled shabbiness of a former day. He was young without any air of boyishness, of inconspicuous build, and his clothes were so old that they fitted the line of his figure with a kind of grace. He wore no tie, and his collar, even at a distance, gave an impression of being anything but fresh. His hair was long, and his hat a shapeless felt arrangement, which also had an air of belonging to him in a particular sense. No one would have supposed him to be an American. His face had a kind of fulllipped comeliness, and he bore himself with an unconsciousness which is the happiest vehicle of personality.

He was laden with a paper parcel and a violincase, and it was with no hope of a job that Mr. Hiram regarded him, for, having paused to get an idea of his surroundings, the man sauntered down the cinder walk, passed the pink station-house, and turned from sight down the shaded street.

The day was hot, and the man's face was wet and

dirty, his hair matted on his forehead. Once or twice he stopped to rest or to watch a cart go by, wiping away the dust its wheels threw into his eyes. As he crossed the road into the main street he had to turn out several times for the frequent and hurried resident who seldom failed to throw him an amused or curious glance. At the corner, where the heat was exhausting, he went inside a grocery store, and, putting his violin-case down with care and tossing the parcel aside, he took off his hat and wiped his brow with a handkerchief so soiled that there was small choice between it and his face.

The grocer had come forward at his entrance, and now stood looking with worn eyes upon his face. When the stranger had tucked his handker-chief away the little man spoke:

"New to this town, I guess—eh?"
"But yes. A foul sort of place."

Eben Harrison allowed his lip to curl.

"That's jest like a foreigner. Anyhow, we wash once a week. We even wash our streets, not to say our faces. There's a book about us." He indicated a pile of small pamphlets. "Come for long?"

"I am looking for a place to-what you call-

board."

"Permanent?"

"That would depend. For a time—" He supplied a gesture of his shoulders in place of further words.

"Wal, they's the hotel. Clark's is temperance—

guess you wouldn't like that; but they's Bullis's, too. Don't care who they take there. Is that a fiddle? Bullis'd jest be in your line. They make a lot of noise there of a Saturday night."

The stranger's face, already red, assumed a heavier tone, and his voice deepened as he stumbled over violent words, many French, a few German, and occasionally one that was English.

"I am a musician," he finished, "and you—I see

it—are a fool."

Eben took the accusation with great calmness. "Wal, I guess I dunno much more 'bout your bein' a musician than you do 'bout my bein' a fool. But I tell you what—you try Miss Massam. I heard she was lookin' out fur a roomer, an' she's mighty fond of a tune. You try her."

"And the lady—she lives—?"

"You jest turn down the first street to the right. You pass the Town Hall 'n' Pliny Rawson's barber shop 'n' you'll come to a white house 'thout a verandy—jest a stoop to it. The front blinds are allas shut, an' they's a lilac bush to the door 'n' a yard on the side with some roses. You try Miss Massam."

The stranger picked up his burdens and moved to the door.

"Stay!" called Eben.

The man paused.

"What's yer name, Frenchy?"

"It is my own—to give—or not to give—Imbecile!"
The walk was not long, but the sun was in the

ascendant and the heat growing more withering. The man was weary, and his temper not improved by his encounter with Yankee wit. Watching for landmarks, he walked on, resenting the trying conditions, his mind a chaos of rebellion against restricting circumstances. Life was evil! That, of course! Had it not presented to him, Jean Kontze, innumerable difficulties and inconveniences? The country of his adoption was a country of idiots. That, too, of course! Had it not received him and treated him with consistent neglect? This particular town, where he had expected not only to find work, but easy triumph, seemed to be on a par with all the rest. Carriages! Dust and heat! Busy jostlers of of all ages and types, all alike ignoring the fact of his genius, all enemies, therefore, and a sun bent on burning the soul out of one's body. It was ahominable!

Carried along by such reflections, he reached the house. He opened the gate in an ecstasy of indignation that it should stick. As he mounted the steps the door opened and a man came out so hurriedly that in brushing roughly against Jean's arm the violin-case, though firmly held, was driven from his grasp. Jean leaped to rescue his treasure. He picked it up and held it to him with straining arm, and turned to annihilate the offender. Fury found voice, and that it spoke in a foreign tongue did not detract from its force. At last the victim's face began to flush, and what the result would have been

would be hard to say if just then an interruption had not been made by the opening of a window and the appearance within it of a woman's head.

"Just a stranger I ran into, Miss Massam," said the man. "He's a good deal put out. I am sorry," he added, turning to Jean, "but you ought to look where you are going. I don't suppose I hurt you much, and I don't like being sworn at on a lady's doorstep. Good-by." He made the lull a moment for departure.

Jean, looking after him, still unbearably angry, had time to realize that if he did not care for further trudging in the sun it was time to make himself pleasant. Miss Massam had come to the door and had opened it, and disfavor narrowed her short-sighted eyes. He took off his hat with grace and smiled at her.

"I am sorry to have made so much disturbance, but this—it is all I love. You will perhaps forgive."

There was some relaxing of the face into which he looked, but no softness in her words.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"They directed me here to find a room."

"Wal, they directed you wrong. I've jest let my room to that young man you talked so wicked to."

Jean stooped and picked up the paper parcel. He really was tired. He was also hungry and thirsty. He did not want to walk the length of Maine Street. He wanted to sit down in the cool

and quiet, take off his collar and look to his fiddle, and he wanted some one to bring him food and drink.

"May I rest—only one moment?" he asked, mildly.

Though she looked at him sharply, she did not refuse, but let him pass in at the shaded doorway to the cool room beyond. Here the mellow colors, the quiet, comforted him, and he did not see that the carpet was worn and the curtains faded and darned.

"If I might ask a glass of water?" he pleaded.

She brought it, and with it a plate of bread and butter. As he ate with the haste and awkwardness of a man who lives alone she watched him.

"Is this—it is the room?" he asked.

"Yes. I get five dollars a week with board."

"Ah, you mean food. I cook for myself, and would pay four dollars."

"Wal, yer don't look steady."

"Madam, I must be steady!" He unlocked the case and took out his violin and the bow. "This—it is my mistress and my life—also my daily bread. The hand that gives her to speak must never tremble. I am a musician."

The lady eyed the instrument, and as he divined the eagerness she would not speak, he put it to his cheek, testing the strings, so that she could see the tender play of his fine hands. Then he took up his bow and played to her, first softly, then with in-

creasing confidence as he saw her smile. He gave her light airs, which she could understand, till her foot went tapping, tapping the worn carpet and her eyes brightened with pleasure. He slipped into a Spanish dance, and then changed sharply into a folk-song of sad, uncanny beauty. In another moment he made her feel young, stirring a forgotten and forsaken heart. He made her sense and thrill to things she would have repulsed had they come to her in so concrete a form as a thought. He turned the room into a palace of enchantment, and he, the master of mystery, wielded his genius for her as if she had been a queen. When he laid down his bow she released the sigh that told him what he had done for her.

"It was real pretty," she said.

"If I could stay here you would have much of my music," he said. "I like these gentle walls, and you are kind. I should like to think that you listened to my music. It would help. Yes! I must go?"

"I've promised Simeon Pierce."

"Simeon Pierce! Do not talk to me of him! It is I who work and sleep in four walls. It is I who must stay here."

"Wal, of course, I didn't want to do fur my roomer, an' Simeon he can't manage fur himself."

"Ah, you see, it was planned for us—I for you and you for me. And I am so tired."

He was standing near the window, and as he

glanced out at the hideous heat and glare of noon he found something for his eyes which held them. At the gate stood a girl. He could see her profile against the green of her sunshade. She wore no hat, and the whole pure outline from brow to chin was relieved to his eyes by the darkness behind. He saw that she was talking to a man. In another moment he saw that she was talking to the man who had knocked his case from his hand half an hour earlier. She was talking gaily, eagerly, laughing often, her hair sparkling with each motion of her head, her color and brilliancy and youth lavish in their display.

"That is Hild Emery," said Miss Massam. She had moved to the window to see what it was that he watched. "She and her mother rent the other half of my house. I'll tell you what I'll do!" she added, suddenly. "I'll take you in if you'll give Hild music lessons. She's a pet of mine, an' she's good

at her music. Will you?"

Simeon Pierce had lifted his hat and was swinging down the street, his long stride carrying him out of sight none too soon for the man who watched. Simeon, too, was young and well colored. The girl came slowly up the walk toward the house.

"I will teach her. Oh yes," said Jean.

The shadow of the house fell over the girls's white gown and put out the gold of her hair.

CHAPTER II

IT was an experience of sharp contrast to go from one side of Miss Massam's house, across the bare hall, into the other side. The rooms the old lady had retained for herself boasted only such comfort as lingered, after fifty years of hard use, in belongings collected in an age when horse-hair and mahogany represented the accepted ideal of luxury. Four feet away a door opened upon a room fitted with soft chairs and old rugs, quaint china and bits of prettiness, commonplace enough elsewhere, but very captivating to Beverly, Maine. Miss Massam was among those who looked with suspicion upon Mrs. Emery's parlor, and she rarely yielded to the seductions of its easy-chairs. She found it possible to refrain from expressing herself on the subject, however. Mrs. Emery paid a good rent; also Miss Massam had learned to find pleasure in Hild's young propinguity.

It was too much to expect that Miss Massam's Beverly should approve of Mrs. Emery at all. Miss Massam's Beverly had nothing to do with the bustle and prosperity of Maine Street, you understand. It had to do with square, flat-faced houses set back from busy streets; with a wooden Congregationalist

meeting-house, which had wanted a coat of paint ever since any one could remember, with the plank walks which rotted in no time, and which, if one trod unwarily on their outer edges, were likely to rise and deal one a masterly blow upon the cheek. It had to do with the simplest and most rigid of definitions for a few abstractions, and it had nothing at all to do with modern problems. It did not, for instance, understand why Milly Stevens, in writing home about Mrs. Emery, should lay so much stress on the fact that she had divorced her husband, not he her. That the marriage had been a failure was all that was clear to Beverly.

On a night a few days after the arrival of Miss Massam's new boarder Mrs. Emery had gone out to play a quiet game of whist at Senator Carson's. The lights were out in the parlor, for the night was sultry, and doors and windows were open to catch what breeze there was.

Miss Massam had added for her tenants a tiny veranda, which overlooked a few roses and shrubs on a weedy lawn. Here, on this evening, sat four young people, so happily at their ease that the play of their voices and laughter was pleasant to hear. The girls wore white, and there was enough light from an electric bulb at some distance down the street to show their shifting outlines and the oval of their faces. The two men had placed themselves on the steps. They were all very near to one another without seeming conscious of it.

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"Go on, Hild," said the other girl, as a train, which had shattered the quiet of the village, receded, and conversation was again possible. "What did

he say then?"

"He said that if I got up at daybreak and did nothing but practise till dusk for several years I might perhaps in time get some idea of the rudiments of piano-playing; that, of course, the violin was forever beyond my powers; that I was like all American girls—a silly, prattling creature, with no idea of the seriousness of art; that 'you are a—what you say—goose, Miss Emery, but I will teach you, oh yes, I will teach you. I shall be very patient, I shall'"—the girl spread out her hands in a gesture of long-suffering earnestness—"I shall be brave! You will come at ten to-morrow, and we will work on the fingers."

Three ready laughs came at her pause, but the man who sat below her, his sleeve touching her white

shoe, did not laugh.

"I don't like it, Hild," he said. "The man's a cad and a foreigner. Why, he isn't even clean. And he's got a red face."

The girl who was not Hild spoke sharply back:

"Well, what has his red face got to do with Hild? It doesn't prevent his being a good music-teacher, does it? If he were good-looking and civilized you might have reason to object."

"He wouldn't have any reason to object then,

Chloe," put in Hild.

"Well, there would be some sense in it. As it is,

there isn't a bit. Our music-teacher at school looks as if he would explode, but he makes us learn our scales. I tell you, you don't get much chance for really good instruction in this town. I think Mrs. Emery is very sensible. The truth is, you can't forgive little Johnny for doing you out of Miss Massam's front room, Simeon."

"Bosh!"

"Bosh your grandmother! What do you think, Alec?"

"The fact is, I don't like the man myself," said Alec Masterman. "He's a cad, as Sim says. You girls don't understand what that means, but it means a lot, I can tell you that!"

As Alec was in the Harvard law school, after a four years' course in the university, his opinion was something to fall with weight into the discussion. Hild, who was just seventeen, had not left Beverly since her mother had settled there ten years before, except for two notable occasions when she had gone for a few days to Boston. Chloe Carson had traveled a little with her father, and she was now in a boarding-school near New York, which gave her considerable prestige. Simeon Pierce had been graduated by a local university and was now studying law in Senator Carson's office. So Alec was, to the small party, the voice of the world.

"I don't care, he can play the violin," said Chloe. "Besides, Hild isn't thinking of getting engaged to him—are you, Hild?"

All the four voices blended in laughter at that, and Hild asked some one to tell her whether French-German musicians were generally supposed to be fond of "leetle geese." As she spoke a surging of cool wind lifted her hair and they heard a sound of thunder.

"It's going to rain," said Simeon, quickly.

"Oh," said Chloe, looking down at her thin dress, "I must go. Hild, I'll come for you in the morning at ten unless it's pouring. Simeon won't ask papa for the day off; but you'll be sure to meet us at the rocks, won't you, Simeon?" she asked, turning to him. "Hild, you can tell your mother that Lizzie has promised to come, so that will be plenty of chaperon. Just as if we were not old enough to go where we like, anyhow!"

"I'll be sure to be there by the four-thirty train and drive home with you," said Simeon. "Alec'll

look after you, all right."

Alec had risen when Chloe did, and no one asked him to stay. The two went over the lawn to the path that led to the street. Simeon and Hild followed as far as the gate, but lingered there to watch them out of sight.

"Alec has improved ever so much," she said.

"So has Chloe in looks. But she has got to be awfully vain."

"Simeon, she isn't. And she is so pretty. I like those ribbon bands she wears in her hair."

"I don't. I like simple hair like yours."

"I wish I could go away," said Hild. "Oh, I do wish I could!"

"Let's sit down here till it begins to rain," said Simeon, as they reached the steps.

The trees had already begun their restless play, and above them great masses of black were gathering together. Hild leaned her head against a post of the veranda. Sometimes when the big tree at the corner of the lawn bent in the rising wind the light from the street flung all its brightness on her. Simeon watched for these moments. He was a short man, powerfully built, with a bull-like neck and catlike eves, handsome in a tense, disturbing way. Hild had known him for more than a year, and had seen him with increasing frequency during this spring and summer. He was so distinctly a man that his preference for her flattered and excited her. She found that she always looked for him, and that if he delayed his coming she grew impatient and miserable. She had almost dreaded Chloe's return in June for fear he would like her friend better than herself; yet she had also looked forward to it, for Chloe would be sure to know just how much he meant by the things he said.

"You're going with Chloe to-morrow, aren't you, Hild?"

There was special eagerness in the question. She answered, carelessly:

"I suppose so."

"Then you are not going to take a lesson?"

"I don't see why you care if I do."

"I do care."

He leaned toward her and took a fold of her dress in his hand. She saw him do it, and her heart gave excited leaps, while her mind sat serenely looking on.

"Well, I don't see why. Mercy, how the wind is

blowing!"

The great tree swept back, and he could see her whole figure—the bare brown arms, the hands clasped on her knees, the free throat, brown too, and the clear line of her chin. The face above he never for a moment forgot. Hild was a pretty girl, with a healthy color and uncommon brown eyes, which had a trick of meeting yours with a sudden and startling completeness, but to Simeon's genius for loving she was all beautiful.

"Do you mean you really don't see why?" he

asked her, his hand creeping nearer to hers.

The mesmerism of the moment held her speechless. She looked down and watched his fingers master hers. But when she felt how his palm burned her flesh she sprang upright, shaking his arm from her knee.

"It's cold and it is beginning to rain," she said. "We must go in." And, without waiting for him, she crossed the veranda and entered the house.

There were no lights, and her fingers traveled over the mantel in vain to find the matches. Either the fingers were unusually awkward or the matches were not there. As she hunted, Simeon came in.

"Let me help you," he said; and she heard only the quiver in his words.

The wind shut the door with a sharp slam. Outside, the storm raised a thousand wild voices along the village street. When the two groping hands met, Simeon Pierce put out his arms and seized her, sweeping her to him, and kissed her once on her soft cheek, and while the kiss burned and burned till it reached and seared the girl's soul a door opened into the hall and Mrs. Emery's tall figure was outlined against the dim light which had been set there.

"Hild—Hild—are you there? What are you

doing?"

"We've just come in, mama. Simeon Pierce is

here. We were hunting for the matches."

"Well, there they are." Mrs. Emery found them and lighted the lamp that stood on a low table. She looked at the two with eyes which asked much and perceived nothing.

Hild sat down at the piano and began to turn over the music on the rack. There was nothing there of much value—several pretty-pretty love songs, a waltz or two, a book of college songs, and numbers of coon songs all opened one on another, and the corner of the cover of each bearing in a flourishing scrawl—"Hild Emery"—and a date.

Her mother left them to take off her hat and gloves in the bedroom above and Hild began to sing. She was still singing in a full voice a popular air when her mother came back. The lady spoke once or

twice to Simeon, and he answered her with respect; but his ears were all for Hild's music, and at last Mrs. Emery sat down to listen, too. The girl finished one song and began another like it. The rain was beating on the roof now in a steady downpour, and the wind was quieter.

Suddenly across the gentle atmosphere of the lamp-lighted room there spread a shock. The door bounded open, and in the space stood Miss Massam's boarder, his long hair a prey to violent fingers, his face brilliant with roused blood, his eyes rolling underneath drawn brows. He wore no collar, and in lieu of a collar-button the neck of his shirt was fastened with a shoe-string. He looked straight at Hild, who had turned on her stool in amazement and was facing him. He raised a dramatic fore-finger, and, pointing it at her, he said, as if the word were shot from him by some force within, "Stop!"

No one appeared to think there was any answer to

be made, so in a moment he continued:

"I say stop! Is it to drive me mad you wish? I tell you I will not be driven to mad that way!"

He strode across the small room and, tearing the music from the rack, trod on it.

"So!" he ejaculated. "I, an artist, make small your damn stuff, so!"

He had been too quick for Simeon, but now two strides brought the men face to face. Gradually, as he looked, Jean appeared to swell, his neck bulging, his eyes starting. "Yah—you! I understand now.

You like that—that rot?" He pointed to the fallen sheets. "She sings to you, does she? So she sings rot. To-morrow at ten she plays to me, and she will play no rot. Till she can hear with those ears she shall play—nothing, nothing, I tell you—but what I say. You understand?"

Mrs. Emery stepped forward. "We quite understand, Mr. Kontze. Please don't make us all uncomfortable. Hild is only too eager to learn."

"Ah, you are a sensible woman. You must not let her do such things. It is sin—crime. I say it. She has the music here, in her soul." He put a hand to his untidy chest. "You must keep her ears clean." He finished so earnestly that no one laughed.

Simeon had drawn back, and, with the briefest of

good nights, he made his rude way out.

"He is gone—that is right!" said Kontze. "I will go, too," he added, as if the idea had just occurred to him. He gave the debris on the floor a vicious grind with his heel and then he looked at Hild. "At ten. Make your ears clean!" he commanded. "And sing no more—to him!" The door slammed, and Hild and her mother were left alone.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated the girl. "How horrid to have such a wildcat next door. I don't think

I'll take any more lessons, mama."

"That would be a pity, Hild. You know very well how I feel in not being able to give you advantages. It is dreadful to me to think you will know

nothing a lady ought to know. Mr. Kontze can teach you both French and German, as well as music. If your uncle Errison ever asks you to Boston again—who knows!"

"I don't care. Everybody says you get a fine

education in the high school here."

"Plenty of Greek and Latin, but no accomplishments. All very well if you mean to marry a farmer. Any one would suppose I had had enough

disappointment without that."

Hild cast a quick glance upon her mother's face. It was a handsome face, but it was slowly falling into lines of heavy discontent that already gave warning of an unpleasant old age. Hild, having been her mother's only companion for ten years, had learned to allow for moods and humor them, and to lighten, unconsciously enough, for she was a good girl, an authority which was too shifting and inconsistent to be respected.

"I'm never going to get married," said Hild,

stooping to pick up and tidy the music sheets.

"And a very good thing if you don't. Anyway, you're too young to think of such things, and I hope you'll put them out of your head. What made Chloe go home and leave you alone with Simeon Pierce?"

"We saw that it was going to storm. Alec Masterman was with her."

"He seems very devoted. I wonder if he is in love with her?"

Hild did not answer.

"Anyway," said Mrs. Emery, "I don't like Simeon coming here so often."

"Why not?" The girl's back stiffened, and her

whole young spirit rushed to rebellion.

"Because he isn't in your class, Hild, and he might

learn to care for you."

Hild could not say what she felt, for it would not have sounded respectful, and she was never audibly disrespectful to her mother. She kept a defiant silence. Her mother went on, not perceiving that for every word she spoke a new shield of antagonism sprang up between her thought and the mind of her child.

"His mother was a dressmaker as a girl. She helped with my wedding things, I well remember. His father was a doctor, but his father's father—no one knows! It is dreadful enough for me to have to live here, as you know, but if I am to see my daughter sink to the level of a mere uninformed country-girl I may as well die at once."

Hild piled the music together with a motion of her pretty hands and began to close the piano for the night. Her back was turned toward her mother, and she did not speak. She knew perfectly surely that she was listening to mere words, and that her mother would not deny her pleasure except momentarily; that the mood would pass; and that if Hild had taken her literally, and isolated herself by an assumed social superiority, her mother would

have been the first to resent the consequent neglect. There was no use in saying this, however, so she closed the piano in silence. Meanwhile she considered. She knew that in her present mood her mother would veto the proposed picnic arranged for to-morrow; and, although she could no doubt be brought to change her mind, these encounters were repugnant to Hild. In her arrogance she despised her mother's indecision and ineffectiveness. Even though she could nearly always evade her mother's authority, in another sense she was her bond slave. To avoid reproaches and hours of nagging misery to which her mother sometimes subjected her she would have gone to any lengths.

Hild saw now that among all her mother's remarks there was only one fixed idea to which she must submit. She was not to be allowed to forego her lessons with Mr. Kontze. She did not know whether she was pleased or sorry. He was something new in her life, and she was at the age when anything new has its lure. More than this, she had harbored among other dreams the ambition of becoming a great singer and seeing worlds at her feet. There was really no harm at all in trying. Not that she would give up for a moment the fun of to-morrow for the sake of a lesson. She was much too fascinated by her curiosity as to what more Simeon would have to say to be willing to miss the day's outing. She hated to remember that he had

kissed her, but a confession of Chloe's the night before, spent together, made this easier to bear. She was very glad he had not kissed her mouth. That would have been horrid, she thought. If she ever got engaged she meant to stipulate that the privileges of a lover should not include kissing her on the mouth.

"Well, we'd better go to bed. I've a woman coming to help bake to-morrow. What are you

going to do?"

"There was something said about a picnic, but it's raining awfully hard now, and I guess it won't be nice enough to go. Do you want me?"

"No; you are better away."

"I'll stay and help if you want me."

"I'd rather you didn't. No need for you to learn how to cook and scrub. I hope you'll have servants to do all that for you."

It was the rule in Beverly that the lady of the house should "do her own work." Whether it was true, as the ladies said, that there was not a servant to be had, or whether Hild's remark that no one who could afford to keep a servant would dream of living in Beverly was more to the point, is doubtful. The ladies managed it all with varying skill and good humor, and got on with as little nerve strain as if they had had twenty maids apiece. Supper at six and dinner at twelve-thirty simplified matters for them; and, as no one expected much from them, and as Beverly did not offer a great deal in the way of

distraction, perhaps it was as well that they should have plenty to do. But Mrs. Emery had never ceased to consider her light housework an imposition of the most humiliating kind, and she would never let Hild help her except in the lightest ways.

"Well, I guess I'll go to bed," said Hild.

They straightened the room, locked the doors and windows, which no one else ever thought of doing, and Mrs. Emery went into the kitchen to arrange things for her morning's work, while Hild went to her own room. A door opened between their two bedrooms, and while they undressed they could talk back and forth. Sometimes this was irksome to Hild, for she had the sacred, absorbing thoughts of youth, and her mother's words were wont to fall like a rough hand among breakable treasures.

To-night silence fell sooner than usual. Hild was never supposed to close her door, and she lay listening to her mother's breathing and the nightheightened sounds beyond her open window. The rain had stopped. She heard the town clock strike eleven, rolling the strokes like cannon-balls up the street. When the last echo grew imperceptible she was conscious of the continuing of that which it had drowned—the distant music of a violin. Sometimes she lost it, for the melody was rendered softly in the room below; but she could hear that it was a pleading, plaintive air, like the thoughts of a lonely soul. It troubled and perplexed her, and only when it ceased was she able to sleep.

CHAPTER III

JEAN KONTZE sat at his window looking out over the hazy September shadows. He had leaned both arms on the window-sill and rested his chin on them, while his eyes were fixed on a break in the trees through which he could see the railroad track. The villainous noise of the frequent trains was one of his trials, and daily trials were not few, for he had a considerable number of pupils both for music and for French, and they were all, to his mind, inflictions. He had only just closed the door upon a frightened boy whom he had annihilated to the limits of his mongrel wit, and after raging about the room for a quarter of an hour he had sunk down here to think the situation out.

It was intolerable—this was the obvious conclusion. But, then, so were most things, and things could, unfortunately, go on being intolerable for an indefinite time. They could even become less tolerable. This the life of his French mother had taught him. He recalled her as a gifted creature, so artistic that life was nearly all pain to her, wedded, only God knew how or why, to a German musician who was talented in proportion to his stupidity in other respects. She had cooked and washed and

slaved, and kept them comfortable at the expense of her health and beauty, and he could never remember that any one had ever thanked her or even been very sorry when she died. His father had promptly married again; and his stepmother had worked and washed and sewed, too, even better than her predecessor, but she had been possessed of a temper which had driven Jean at nineteen to Paris to shift for himself. There he had managed to earn a little money by playing in cafés and music-halls, and there he had met a well-to-do restaurant proprietor who had gone to America and had made a competence in a few years. This man had an ear for music and detected Jean's talent, and had urged him to go to the states; had even given him letters to two or three men in his line in New York. So at twentyfive Jean had sailed, third-class passenger, for New York. Thence, with a friend, he had drifted to Boston, where he had the misfortune to fall ill. Meanwhile he had saved a little money, for he had a strain of shrewdness in his motley composition which made it a pleasure to him to lay by his earnings. As he was in need of a change and country air, his landlady suggested Beverly to him, having been brought up there herself. His money was nearly gone and he had lost his place in a theater orchestra, so he took her suggestion, and now he was saving again for a larger venture elsewhere.

Living, as he could live, on almost nothing at all, he had already enough to go back to Boston and

stay a few days until he could get work, but he was not sure he wanted to. Miss Massam was nice to him, and just lately he had spent a good deal of time. talking to Mrs. Emery, who had given him a great deal of sympathy. He had come to feel that he could go across the hall to her rooms whenever he liked. Hild sometimes came in while he was there and accompanied him on the piano while he played; and, though he lost his temper with her rendering of the music, and abused her candidly and thoroughly when she did not follow him with ease, he enjoyed himself none the less. He was interested in Hild's lessons, moreover. He was teaching her French as well as music, and found her a quick pupil at both. He liked to talk to her, too, for she could listen forever if he told her of his wanderings-of Paris, gay and bad; of Munich, sordid and spiritual; of Italy, warm and rich; of England, which he hated with a deadly hatred. It was long since he had had women about him. Mrs. Emery and Miss Massam had mended his clothes between them and bought him some linen, and he managed to keep a little more tidy with their help. Women were, he meditated, distinctly useful to talk to, scold, and to mend one's clothes; to cook one's meals, too. He was not fond of cooking. He had burnt his fingers a few days before, and Mrs. Emery and Miss Massam had invited him to supper on the two days following. He had been unutterably wretched, for his finger was too painful to allow him to hold his bow, but he had

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enjoyed being waited on and having good things to eat. Once, when he had been stretched out on Mrs. Emery's comfortable sofa, Hild had brought him a cup of coffee, and he had felt more pleased than even the excellent coffee could explain. Now, to-night, suppose there were a woman at hand who belonged there and could not say it was supper-time and she must go! He could tell her all about those villainous pupils of his while she was getting his evening meal, and when it was all ready he would only have to go and sit down, and she would bring him all he wanted; and if it wasn't right, why, she would have to make it right. Of course she would have to understand cooking and sewing, but all these American women seemed capable. Only he hoped there wouldn't be babies-great heavens! What a brainracking thought!

He started up, almost as terrified as if the offending child were there in person. It took him a moment to realize that his thoughts had not brought him any nearer to their consummation, that the cries his memory of certain train journeys presented to his auditory nerve were yet mercifully absent

from the reality.

Anyway, it was a woman's business to keep babies out of the way if she did have them. He had vivid recollections of having been kept out of the way himself when he was a child; and, as the result of failure in this respect had been painful to him as well as to his mother, he had soon learned to manage

the matter himself. He forgot his momentary horror and reverted to a pleasanter train of thought.

The deepening shadows warned him that the hour had come for food. He meant to wander across the hall later, and he could hear Miss Massam moving about in her kitchen, so he knew that Beverly's supper-hour had come. He got up and went to a table where a chafing-dish, a patent coffee pot, several dirty spoons and plates, and a cup and saucer stood, with a few very simple cooking-utensils. He opened a cupboard above and took out two eggs, a plate of cold cabbage, the remains of a boiled potato, and some bread. Also out of an old tobacco can he extracted a little ground coffee, not unmixed, I fear, with "Yale Blend." These commodities he began to manipulate with a great deal of dexterity.

While he was busy with them a door opened that led to Miss Massam's parlor, and a man entered. Jean looked at him; then he took another egg from his larder and poked about in the corners as if in search of something further. At last he said to the new-comer, "You go and ask Miss Massam for more potato, yes?" When the man returned with one he cut it and added it to the dish he was preparing. No further word was exchanged until the two men faced each other over scrambled eggs, served in the fryingpan, and brown potatoes, scooped into the cover of a dish the bottom of which had long since been broken. There was steaming coffee, which had an

excellent flavor, though they had to take turns with the cup, and there was plenty of toasted bread.

Mert Massam was the disreputable brother of five most respectable sisters, and the disowned son of parents whom he had wounded and humiliated to the last day of their lives. During his boyhood he had treated school with utter contempt, which no amount of flogging or argument could alter. He liked to stand on a street corner and watch the people with shrewd and quizzical eyes, his mouth screwed ready for a whistle, and a few pennies jingling pleasantly in his pocket. The shabbier his clothes were the better pleased he seemed to be. Loafers and rogues liked to teach him bad words, so that by the time he had reached the age when most boys have arrived at some sort of usefulness his accomplishments consisted in a great aptitude in spitting at a target, a weird gift of whistling, and a vocabulary of oaths calculated to rout a regiment. After one or two experiences of the effects of hard drinking he was never seen under the influence of alcohol; and he was never in possession of enough money at a time for gambling, even if he had ever shown a disposition to that kind of viciousness. As the years went on and he grew older he became a Beverly landmark, and filled a humble but definite place in the world, to his own satisfaction and the detriment of no one. He made a few pennies by the thousand and one odd jobs that small boys usually monopolize—the distributing of hand-bills, deliver-

ing papers, sometimes, on the occasions of ladies' "At Homes," taking the precious cards from house to house, all of which he carried out with painstaking conscientiousness. Beverly came to withdraw the reproach of half-wittedness which it had at one time been inclined to bestow upon him. One reason for this may have been that he knew how to turn a phrase so that it fastened to the person it was intended for, like the tooth of a bulldog, and his speeches had a way of being repeated and laughed at over most Beverly supper-tables. It was no small advantage to be in Mert Massam's good graces.

Although Jean had not taken in the importance of winning over this Beverlyite to his standard, he had won him in a prompt and masterly fashion, and the two had become firm friends. Jean had discovered that Mert, after once hearing him play a sonata of Tchaikovsky's, was in the habit of visiting his sister nearly every day, sitting in a corner of her parlor until he had heard Jean at his work, and then going away whistling the same air which Jean had played with no mean imitation of the sound of a violin. One evening Jean had opened the door and invited him to come in and had offered the shabby audience the best his genius could produce. It would have made a curious picture had any one with seeing eyes and dexterous hand been there to interpret it. The untidy and neglected room, the figure of the ne'er-do-well shabbily bunched into a chair, his raised face harrowed by weather and idleness to a

leathery mass wasting over a shrinking soul, his mouth puckered for whistling, and his eyes bright with a spirit roused from a forgotten grave; in another corner the musician, translated from his meager human proportions into the interpreter of a loveliness so transcendent that it glorified its medium. So much that was ugly and sordid dominated by what was utterly spiritual and divine!

Since then the scene had been repeated often. Mert would listen as long as Jean would play, and he never spoiled his rapt listening by any clumsy word of praise. Once, as an experiment, Jean played a mean little popular air that had lately passed the stage of novelty and hadn't yet become the prey of hand-organs. He played it in the spirit of a tittering young girl, with a dash and slam and a wailing sentimentality. Mert listened as usual to the end. When the final bar was played he rose to go.

"You do not like him?" asked Jean.

"Don't like bein' made a damn fool of," answered the audience, from the door. "Damn fool enough, anyhow."

It took persuasion and tact to soothe him and three airs from Handel and two from Bach before he was again good-humored. It was doubtful if he knew the difference in the compositions, but he well knew the difference in Jean's rendering of them.

This was why Jean shared his scrambled eggs and brown potatoes so unquestioningly on this September

evening. Over the coffee and a cigarette Mert waxed talkative.

"Know Sim Pierce?" he asked.

"The one who makes trouble with my pupils? He is a—what you say—he meddles. He is no good. Better to shovel coal in his ears than to play music to him."

Miss Massam had replenished her coal celler the day before, and Jean had resorted to cotton wool and finally, as a mad recourse, to wild flight. Hence the metaphor.

"American eagle!" Simeon's prominent and slightly hooked nose and his bright eyes made the description pertinent. "Likes to grab and

swoop," added Mert.

"So."

"Had a letter from Chloe Carson to bring Hild. He took it."

"He?"

"'Give me that, Mert,' sez he. 'I'll d'liver it.' Wa'n't his bizness. 'Merican eagle! Likes to swoop and grab!" Nothing was more displeasing to Mert than to have his usefulness made light of. He regarded his odd-jobbing with the greatest seriousness, and required a like respect from others. Simeon had committed the unpardonable sin against his susceptibilities.

Jean leaned in his chair, puffing at his long pipe and meditating as the smoke rose. At that moment his German origin was apparent. There was noth-

ing French about the solidity that incased him at certain moments of physical well-being.

"Did you ever consider," he slowly inquired-

"did you ever consider the-ah-marriage!"

Mert Massam was not accustomed to smiling. Forced to the attempt, his face broke into an incredible number of wrinkles and his lips slid back to disclose an imperfect line of yellow teeth.

"Me?" He gloated over the idea as something too good to be lightly dealt with. Then he said, in imitation of a feminine voice: "Mert, where've ye bin? Mert, ye doggone fool, whatcha doin' settin' round the stove? Go 'n' bring in some wood. Mert, gi' me that quarter—ye'll fritter it away on tobaccy or some such foolery. Nice kind o' man I got; foolin' away yer time when yer pore wife's slavin' off her fingers fur ye! Where'd ye expect ter die when yer go to?" Mert shook his head violently twice, and with a final expressive "Me!" he returned to his smoking.

"So," said Jean, thoughtfully. He had once or twice noticed that Mert's opinions had a certain shrewdness worthy of respect. On the other hand, his observation and Mert's did not tally on this subject. He contrasted his earlier revere with the picture his disciple painted, and decided that each might be accurate. It would depend on the man.

"Ah! I am considering it," said Jean. "All these—it is a trouble." He indicated the suppertable and the room, though there was nowhere evi-

dence of any one's having been put to much trouble in its care. "These are also troubles." He handled his coat and shirt. "I am considering it."

Jean finished his pipe, and then he played to Mert while the room grew dark. When he laid down his violin he went to the bespeckled shaving-mirror, and in the waning light of the windows he arranged his tie. Mert took the hint. He rose, and with a very definite gesture of his thumb he pointed in the direction of Mrs. Emery's side of the house.

"Goin' over?" he asked.

"I am considering it," said Jean, gravely.

"All right." Mert nodded twice with much decision. He moved to the door, and there he turned back to say:

"Don't forget 'Merican eagle. Likes to swoop an' grab." And with a descriptive clawing of his lean fingers in the air and a repetition of his weird grin he departed.

CHAPTER IV

WITH early autumn Chloe Carson betook her pretty spoiled self to her boarding-school. And Alec Masterman the same week returned to Cambridge. Hild, of course, knew all about the exchange of society pins between them, and all the rest of it, and her own affair with Simeon Pierce was progressing fast. She still played with the idea of being in love, not at all prepared to succumb to her first lover, but influenced each day a little by his presence and the interests of the situation. Hild was essentially one of the girls who must be loved. Like every young spirit, she looked about for a valuation to place on her own existence. She found it in the eyes of a man.

The high school had reopened, and Hild was studying hard, hoping to graduate in June. She was also giving much time to her music, and twice a week she had lessons in French. Mr. Kontze was a frequent visitor in their little parlor; and as the autumn waned into winter the situation grew difficult, for there was no reconciling Simeon and Kontze, and there was only one room in which to receive them both. Her mother liked the musician, and Hild was pleased to see her mother pleased; and, though she

had not hesitated to ridicule Jean to Chloe once, the ridicule had lately dropped out of her letters, and she and Simeon had quarreled because she would not let him abuse her instructor.

"He may be absurd as a man," she had objected, "but he is a splendid violinist, and you ought to

respect that."

Simeon had waxed sullen and had walked at her side—it was just after school-hours—without speaking. Neither could she, angered at having been forced into a position she disliked and from which pride forbade her to retreat, think of anything to say. They had parted at her gate with the chilliest civility, and she had not seen him for two days.

After this troubles accumulated. Bad news had come from her uncle in Boston, to whom Mrs. Emery had always looked for Hild's chance in life. He had died quite suddenly, leaving only enough money for his wife and daughters to live on in a very small way. The enormous salary he had made from his position as president of a trust company had vanished, and with it Hild's chances of a Boston season. It was difficult to make Mrs. Emery forget this blow for a moment, and life at home was only bearable when Jean Kontze came in to spend the evening. He had a way of making Mrs. Emery listen to a hash of confidences, anecdotes, complaints, while he smoked his long pipe, and then he would call Hild to play, and so would pass the evening. His friendship flattered the lady, and she was at her best with him.

They could talk, too, of countries and wonders they had both seen, and Hild's mother grew animated over these conversations as Hild had never seen her before. In short, Hild could hardly have gone on without Miss Massam's boarder.

Another grief was Chloe's failure to come home at Thanksgiving. Senator and Mrs. Carson were in New York, and Chloe was to join them there, and Alec Masterman was to be there for the few days' vacation. Chloe wrote, moreover, of her determination to go to Europe in the summer with a party of girls chaperoned by two teachers, "whatever papa savs." This was bitterness to Hild, and then, as a final flick of fate's lash on a skin already tender, came Simeon's proposed departure for New York. He told her, as a piece of tremendous good fortune, of his chance to enter the office of a very well-known firm in Nassau Street. They were walking home from a church supper, and Hild was glad of the dark, for her eyes filled with wretched humiliating tears. When she could say "How nice!" the words put out his enthusiasm with the completeness of a switchedoff gas-jet. He put his arm within hers and said, quietly:

"There's no use in my staying here."

"Of course not! So, naturally, you are dying to go away. Like everybody else. Mr. Kontze is the only person I can think of who really likes Beverly," she added, sweetly. "He says he ought to go, but he doesn't want to."

"I'm going to talk to your mother about Kontze before I go," he said, as if he meant it.

"Do! You'll agree so well."

"So long as you agree with me, Hild, I don't care."

"Well, I don't agree with you at all. I like Mr. Kontze. He's foreign, but that makes him all the more interesting. He's been to such a lot of places. And he can talk about them, too. I'm sick of people who've only lived in this town all their lives."

She could not see how the shaft told, but she could feel his arm tremble; and he said in a moment:

"Then it's lucky I'm going away."

"Didn't you begin at the very beginning by saying how lucky it was?" she asked.

"Hild, you know why."

"Oh yes, I know very well. Just as I'd feel myself. Anything to get away from Beverly!"

"Anything, Hild, to get all that's sweet in Beverly

or anywhere else in the world for my own!"

"Oh, that's easy to say."

"You know it's true."

She was so miserable that she let him slip his hand over hers, and the strength and warmth of it were comforts. The night was too sharp for lingering by the gate, and he would not come in, for he saw the shadow of a man on the blind.

The talk with Mrs. Emery had come about, and Hild's mother was so angry that she tried to extract promises from Hild to the effect that she would have nothing more to do with the young man; but Hild

would promise nothing, and Simeon's cause was distinctly on the gain. When he left she began to look for his frequent letters, and it was almost compensation for his absence to get three or four times a week long and well-written love-letters. He poured out his soul to her in return for occasional and very formal little notes. Otherwise life was excessively dull.

Chloe came home at Christmas—a somewhat different Chloe, dressed with the greatest care, with hair done in a lately introduced style which was becoming but a little over-impressive. She had a great deal to say about the dullness of Beverly, the impossibility of living there for more than two weeks at a stretch, the provinciality of the people, and she

was full of pity for poor Hild's trying fate.

Now, Hild had been very sorry for herself, but it did not necessarily mean that she wanted any one else to be sorry for her, so she put a very brave face on the matter and squashed sympathy. When Chloe, moreover, turned her wit upon Jean Kontze, Hild grew dignified. He and his music were all she had at the moment to present in the face of Chloe's conquests and brilliant prospects, so she made the most of them, though in a half-hearted way. Her defense, however, was so noticeable, as compared with her attitude toward the musician three months ago, that Chloe looked startled. She had been showing Hild her new clothes, and now she sat down on a spangled ball-gown suitable for a woman of forty and looked gravely at her friend.

"Is he in love with you?" she asked.

"Oh, gracious no! Much more likely to be in love with mama."

"Are you sure?"

"Of course I am. That green hat is perfectly lovely, Chloe."

"I must tell mama to invite you to New York next winter," promised Miss Carson. It had arrived at the point where she told her parents what to do and they did it.

"Simeon came to see me quite a lot before I came away," Chloe let drop before Hild left her. "He's getting on awfully well. Papa knows the man whose office he's in. I guess he'll make a lot of money some day. Does he write often?"

"Not lately." Hild raised a haughty chin. "Mama doesn't like me to write to him. She says—you know she thinks his mother's dreadfully common."

"Oh, of course. But he's all right to send you flowers and so forth. Some of the girls at school have twenty or thirty men's photographs on their bureaus, and one girl I know has fifteen frat pins. She wears them all on her waist just here"—Chloe indicated the right spot—"and one day she had three bunches of violets from different fellows. She's simply the loveliest thing. She's been to Europe twice, and brought back such a lot of clothes! She could have been married to a lot of men. But she's waiting for a grande passion. She knows the world awfully well, and I can tell you she has lived."

Later on, when Hild had departed, Chloe invaded the middle-aged comfort of the library to drag her father from the perusal of his paper and to divert her mother from her knitting. Mrs. Carson was a comfortable lady, who looked up to her lively daughter and showed her that she did. She had a motherly heart, badly managed by an indolent mind, and was the soul of kindness and conscientiousness. She was just barely presentable enough not to hinder her rising husband nor to humiliate him when he had risen.

"Papa," said Chloe, as if it were all his fault, "I believe there is something in what people are saying about Hild."

"Well, and what's that, chick?" inquired her admiring dad.

"I told you last night at supper"—this reproachfully—"that she will end by liking him. I think Mrs. Emery means to arrange it."

"No!"

"Yes, I do. Hild was quite huffy to-day when I made fun of him. They say he's always there."

"What's become of young Simeon?"

"He's away."

"So he is, and at seventeen that makes a lot of difference, doesn't it? Well, well, you're all children yet. Hild 'll be all right, don't you fret."

Mrs. Carson glanced up as Chloe was heard to open the piano in another room.

"I should think Mrs. Emery 'd know enough not to want Hild to marry a foreigner," she said.

Accepting the inattentive "Why?" from behind the Senator's paper as sufficient encouragement, she continued:

"Her own marriage ought to have taught her. Nobody knew a thing about Paul Emery except that he seemed to have plenty of money and queer ideas. You remember him, don't you?"

Senator Carson laid down his paper and removed

his glasses.

"Yes, I do. He knew a lot-that man. In those days we used to have the best fishing in Maine over at Free Rocks. Emery came down to study the fishermen. Great old boys they were, too, in those days. None like 'em now. He got a bad cold on his lungs and was brought to the hotel here, and I'd got to know him, so I used to go to see him a lot. That's when he met Alice Clark. She was a handsome girl, no doubt about that. I never thought there was much else in her but good looks. Emery thought there was, though. She always walked along like a woman who is thinking of something much finer than you could guess. Emery believed it, and married her to find out what it was. Must have been a bump when he did find out! I was sorry for Emery."

Mrs. Carson's mouth settled into displeased lines. "Now, William," she said, "you know that isn't fair! I think it's right down mean, I do. Every-

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body knew he took that girl—a chambermaid at Page's—to New York. Just as if anybody'd stand that! But it's always just the same. When a man is a brute you always blame a woman!"

"Well, if it wasn't for women, wouldn't we behave

pretty well?" chuckled the Senator.

His paper happened to be of interest, so he returned to it.

Meanwhile Hild walked home in the blue-green twilight, which was caught and lengthened by the piles of soft snow. Gentle far-away stars came out in the sunless blue sky, and Hild's feet made a sharp crunching sound on the covered walks. The frost locked the winds so that the stillness between sounds was uncanny. Sleighs slid by her now and then, their bells merry or sweet, according to their nearness. She could scarcely see the people who passed on the opposite sidewalk, so high were the banks of packed snow on either side of her path. She protected now this cheek, now that, with her muff, for the air met her flesh like a smooth mask of ice. An old-fashioned Christmas, every one said, and bad for the undertakers!

"'Night!" some one at her side greeted her. She looked up over her muff to see Mert Massam touch his cap. He struck her as being terribly cold in an overcoat which was worn thin, but he fitted his step to hers, obviously intending to walk beside her. She felt a little embarrassed for a suitable remark to

make. Finally she lifted her lips over her muff far

enough to say, "Awfully cold."

"Unhum. Guess Weather Bureau 'll say so tomorrow." The newly established Weather Bureau in connection with a local paper was one of Mert's pet butts. He chuckled, without any facial expression to correspond. "Miry reads weather reports. Said to-day 'Slightly warmer this evenin'; southwesterly winds.' Ain't goin' in to tend to her furnace. She can git warm on southwesterly winds."

Miry was the sister whom he lived with as much as

he lived in any special place.

Hild laughed into her muff.

"Bin up?" inquired Mert, with a gesture of his thumb toward the Carson "mansion," to quote the local papers, which stood on a hill.

Hild nodded.

Mert condensed whole paragraphs of disgust and disapproval into one short grunt. Hild looked up surprised.

"Why shouldn't I?" she asked.

"Better t' hum."

"Why, I thought you liked the Senator."

"Do!" Mert touched his cap. It was his way of showing homage. "Don't like fool girls."

"Chloe!" Hild ejaculated in surprise. "Why,

Mert, she's perfectly lovely."

"Fool girl," repeated the man, stubbornly.

It must be admitted that Hild's thoughts of her friend five minutes before had not been all tender.

That would have been too much to expect of her. Chloe's reference to Simeon, whether intentionally or not, had left on Hild the impression that her former lover had been affixed by her brilliant friend. To Hild this seemed regrettable, but only too convincingly natural. Up to the time Simeon had left Beverly he had never seen any one but Beverly people. Of course, with the change to wider horizons (thus she visioned New York life) his standards changed. She was well trained enough in the American ideal of success to take this thought with spirit. Oh, to show them all! Her small hands had clenched within the warmth of her muff, and she had then and there formed the desperate resolve of "showing" them somehow, sometime! What she was to "show" was not quite clear. Perhaps it was an indomitable something within her and of which she was increasingly conscious, which only wanted the light of inspiration to work marvels.

So when Mert described her friend in his terse and uncomplimentary phrase she may not have been wholly displeased. She may even have wished she shared his convictions. However, she answered,

loyally:

"Oh no. Chloe's a dear, and the prettiest thing!"

"Sell her at a church fair for thirty cents."

"No, you don't!" Hild laughed. "Why, the bow in her hair cost more than that! I'm the thirty-cent girl, Mert."

"You're dandy!" Mert was emphatic. "Wouldn't sell you for a cart-load of tobaccy 'n a book."

"What would you sell me for, then?"

Mert looked up at the windows of his sister's front room, for they had reached the gate. Kontze's side of the house was dark. They knew he must be with Hild's mother.

"Fiddle!" said Mert. For a second, while he touched his hat and swung abruptly away down the street, she thought the word was an ejaculation of displeasure that there would be no music for him to-night. Then she suddenly saw that it was the answer to her question. Mert would sell her for a fiddle if she were his to sell. Luckily she wasn't his or any one's yet. Cold as it was, she did not hurry to the door. She was glad Kontze was there, to be sure. They would have some music, and Hild was getting on so well now that Jean rarely flew at her as he used to do when her lessons began. Her singing had been put aside, as Jean said he didn't understand the voice and wouldn't let her sing without instruction. But he had introduced to her the wonderful world which musicians own and which she was beginning to claim as hers. No one but Jean, not even her mother, knew how it had captivated her. He understood and watched the developing of that soul for music which he had detected in her at once. While they played together there was a sympathy between them which spoke in the music they made. Jean had come to hate the idea of

playing his own music to any other accompaniment. Hild's technique still wanted years of hard training, but her comprehension of all he told her, her quickness of grasping the musical idea, were all even he could expect or wish. Yet when he laid aside his violin and she moved away from the piano there was so great a sea of differences between them that talking to each other was as if two people on either side of the Atlantic had tried to toss weighted messages across. But Hild was comely and a woman, which was all Jean looked for in her, while he, apart from his music, was nothing Hild had learned to admire as a man.

To-night, however, she had been conscious that Chloe's question as to his feeling for her had awakened a new idea.

She slowly turned the knob of the door and entered the bare hall. She could hear her mother's voice at once, and Kontze's responses came in somewhat excited tones. Once she heard her own name. When she entered the room both had stopped talking. Her mother was regulating the lamp and Jean was smoking furiously. Hild caught a glance which her mother threw toward Jean, but she could not see that he made any response.

"What's the matter?" asked the girl.

As Jean did not answer, Mrs. Emery was forced to reply.

"Nothing. Why?"

"You both look funny."

Mrs. Emery sat down and took up some knitting. "Go and take your things off and I will tell you all about it, Hild," she said.

Her tone went straight to Hild's heart and set it quivering. Something was going to happen. She was sure of it. She had time while she was smoothing her hair to brace herself against her mother's talent for nagging. Whatever was coming, it clearly had to do with herself and her future. Hild was too young and too heart-sore to have a sane outlook on that future, but still she was nearer to having it than her mother. This she knew instinctively. When a woman has failed and blames the world, or circumstance, for it she has no word worth saying to youth. Hild felt this none the less keenly because she did not put it into words.

When she re-entered the parlor they were waiting for her. She understood that they had exchanged hurried words during her short absence. She looked from one to the other, and then she took her place defensively on the other side of the low table so that they had to look across it to see her. Mrs. Emery knew a thrill of pride as the lamplight fell on her daughter. Hild stood very erect; her face, which had lost its tan, bore the full brightness upon it. Her eyes were, for the moment, lowered, and her girlhood, with all its fresh sweetness, was there, undefended, before them. But when she raised her brown eyes and confronted her mother with their glance Mrs. Emery was conscious that something

there was able to oppose, even to defeat, her, if it so willed. Ignorant and unskilled as the hand might

be, the weapon lay ready to use.

Jean looked at the girl with other eyes. He saw her superb health and her beauty and he attached to his image of her her special usefulness to him. The man in him swamped the musician as he looked, and the man in him was a singularly stupid animal. He liked the roundness of Hild's lines, the warm color on her cheek, the richness and wealth of her hair. He liked her look of strength and energy. She looked like a girl who would develop into a robust woman, one who could rise at six and work all day without tiring. Jean had imbibed from his father and his father's people the idea that a woman failed unless she were capable of just this. Taken now, Hild would make the sort of wife he wanted, he thought. He had no wish to win her. He had really not considered her side of the question for a moment. It was, of course, every woman's business to marry and, having married, to like it, or else there was something wrong with the woman. And it was because Hild struck him as the right sort of a woman that he had picked her out. Therefore if she married him she would do her duty and be the better for it. If he reasoned the matter out at all it was thus he settled it.

It was evidently Mrs. Emery who was to be spokesman.

"Hild," she said, "Jean has a most excellent

chance to join a New York orchestra. He thinks he must accept."

Hild was conscious of consternation. This, too, then was going out of her life.

"Oh!" she said, blankly.

Her mother continued:

"He wishes to tell you about his prospects and to make a suggestion which has my most hearty approval. I am no longer young, my child, and now that I have quite lost track of your father I am all you have in the world. This is a hard thought to sleep on, Hild, and I have so many hard thoughts." Mrs. Emery's voice broke as Hild had known it would at this point. "Dear child, if you settle this matter happily I shall be glad. If you feel you cannot, I can bear it, as I have borne everything else. I can bear that, Hild, but I could not bear the thought that you will ever leave me for a man who would teach you to neglect and forget your mother. That would kill me. I admit it. It is best that you know. We ask for no hurry. I am only anxious that you should decide. I do not wish to influence you, but now that Jean is leaving us is the time to settle whether it is to be forever. Will you let the one who has brought you so much, who is congenial to you in so many ways, who could give you so broad and noble a life, go away to never return? But think well, Hild, my dearest."

She rose to go, but as she moved toward the door Hild gave a cry and bounded after her,

seizing her with hands that held her firmly, desperately.

"Don't go, mother; don't, don't go!"

Her eyes were fastened on Jean. He had not stirred during her mother's words. He did not seem greatly concerned. He looked comfortable and a little sleepy, but his eyes followed Hild.

Mrs. Emery drew away with a gentle, "Come,

Hild."

"He can say what he wants to say with you here," said the girl, breathing fast. "Mother, you mustn't go."

"Hild, you distress me."

At that the girl's hands dropped. The muscles in her bare throat tightened, and Jean could see how white the flesh was beneath her raised chin. Mrs. Emery rustled out of the room and Hild, listening desperately, heard the click, click of the gently closed door. To Hild it seemed desertion, almost unhuman.

Jean let her stand there. He did not knock the ashes from his pipe, nor rise. He and Mrs. Emery had discussed the whole thing, and he considered it settled. Perhaps it was to be expected that Hild should be startled. He really had no means of knowing how girls took these things. They were brought up, he took it for granted, in the protection of ignorance, just as chickens were brought up in incubators. Neither chickens nor girls had any means of knowing what was going on in the world outside, and so, of course, they believed what they

were told, and acted accordingly. Hild had been told pretty plainly what her duty was, and he did not dream that she would question it. As for himself, he was immensely satisfied.

"Your esteemed mother," he said at length, "has, I do not doubt, made clear to you that I hope you will promise to marry me. Not at once—no, no! You must understand I have first to arrange many things. But when, perhaps a few, perhaps many months, have passed I will come back, when the time comes, and we will be married."

Hild caught at her hands, twisting one in the other, her face growing slowly white. Jean, watch-

ing her, continued:

"You are a good girl," he said, kindly, "an' will make a good wife. We will play much together. It will be good, very good. When you are under my eye always I can teach you better, oh yes! You will soon be fairly skilled with the piano. You will be able to give lessons and accompany me in concerts. That will please you—yes?"

Hild's glance fell.

"Mr. Kontze, I could do that without marrying you."

He looked at her sharply, raising himself in his

chair, his pipe smoke rising unheeded.

"You say?"

"I say I need not marry you!" She faced him bravely. "Don't you see that all you want is a musical assistant? All I want is a life away from

this place, an independent life of my own. I want to be an artist. I've thought almost a year about it now. I know it's what I'm fitted for. If I could earn a little, mama could afford to live in Boston. I could gladly accompany you and work with you and for you, and you, in return, could help me, too. Please, please don't talk of marrying. I don't want to be married. I'm only a girl. I'll do anything for you really and truly, but I can't, can't marry you, Mr. Kontze."

He had heard her to the end, listening with closer attention than he was wont to give to any one's words. His pipe had gone out. The slow red was mounting to his temples. The curious solidity that sometimes held him dropped away like a mask, and

his quick Latin blood rose furiously.

"Child—idiot! You do not know what you speak. It is impossible. I tell you I want a wife. To help me you must be mine—mine. Not what you call independent—independent. What good would you be to me then, tell me that. I, Jean Kontze, am I a mere street-organ man, to talk to me so? The time will come when I am great—great beyond your eyes to see! My music will be everywhere. The world—it will offer me all things! Meantime I need a wife—a woman to help—to keep me comfortable, happy. To come when I call or go when I say. Independent! Idiot! Have you no sense? If I want an independent, can I not hire one? I say—I will give you money if you will do so and so. She

say maybe no, maybe yes. That is an independent. But a wife—ah, that is different. It makes no difference if it is night or morning, if she is well or sick. So!"

"Oh!" said Hild. "Oh!"

Her rapid mind searched backward for anything to compare with Jean's words. She remembered whole pages of sentiment which formed her ideal of lovemaking and which she had gleaned from cheap novels it is to be feared. Simeon had only spoken of marriage as some far-away dream of happiness wherein she, if he won her, was to be queen absolute in a world made expressly for him and her. Her mother, she knew, looked upon it as a state wherein a woman should be made wholly contented, and enjoy unlimited generosity and devotion. Hild had learned to regard Mrs. Emery's disappointment as a thing so rare as to be particularly cruel. And yet her mother had distinctly urged her to accept this man, whose idea of marrying her seemed to be much the same as it would have been in investing in a slave. And even while she listened to his words she knew they were very real, as much she had listened to about love and marriage was not. At any rate, he had told her what he wanted. If he had pleaded with her every bone in her body would have shuddered away from him. She had never come so near to liking him as she did now.

"You understand?" he asked her, and, taking up his pipe, he relighted it with a hand that still trembled.

"I think I do. But I can't marry you, Mr. Kontze."

He started to his feet and rushed upon her, shak-

ing his hand in her face.

"You say that to me?" he cried. "You dare! I tell you I wish it. I, Jean Kontze, am I not to be considered? I, a genius, one who will give to the world noble songs to rejoice nations? Who are you to defy me? What do you intend? Are you a no-good girl, after all? A doll—a fool—a common creature of no soul? I have come to like you, to wish for you more than for another. I can play with you beside me—yes—I tell you I can work with you. Is this nothing? Is this a thing to say 'No' to? I say it is not. It is all arranged, I tell you. You are a girl, a child. You have no sense. It is I and your mother who know."

"I'm sorry. I wish you would let me help you

without marrying you."

"Yah—the girl is a fool. I feared it! You are no good to me without marrying, I tell you so. You will talk no more. It is settled. When you think a little you will know it is right. How can a child like you tell what she wants? All women want to marry. It is their nature. Otherwise where would the babies come from? You are made without sense, because who with sense would have babies? So! Therefore you do not know what you want. You say you wish music. Very well. You will have music. You know nothing about

marriage, but every one knows it is what women wish. Therefore you will like it when it comes. So it is!"

Hild's pallor was gone.

"But if I wanted to marry some one else?"

He turned on her so suddenly that she stepped back. "So! I surprised it. It is indeed time you married! It is the wretched young robber who overthrows strangers. The earless puppy—yes, it is he! Your mother has feared it. I have feared it. You love him? Is it? It is thus they keep their maidens in this strange land! The earless puppy has gone away and you still remember him. Yah! And I, Jean Kontze, offer marriage to you and you think you dare to refuse! I shall go. I can no longer contain my anger. I shall go. I shall leave you to your mother. We will talk again when she has taught you sense. Not till then. But I will have no earless puppies. Recall that!"

To the girl's infinite relief he kept his word and left her. Before Hild could be sure he had gone Mrs.

Emery slipped gently into the room.

"Hild, my child."

The girl turned on her.

"Don't speak to me!" she said, and then suddenly she put her hands to a face contorted with childish sobs, her shoulders and whole body shaken by the force of them. Before her mother could reach her she had fled to her own room, and there, with trembling fingers, for the first time in her life she locked the door.

CHAPTER V

THE days that followed were days of silent persecution. Chloe had gone back to school, puzzled and hurt by her friend's unwonted reserve. "Hild doesn't look well," she told her mother; "keep your eye on her, that's a dear." Which be-

hest Mrs. Carson promptly forgot.

Mrs. Emery went about the house, talking little, except to Kontze, and sighing much, especially when Hild was within earshot. There were no music lessons. Hild did not know that it was her mother who suggested this. "She will learn what she will have to miss," she had told Jean. As to Jean, he put off his departure from day to day and Hild, under the oppression of her mother's reproachful silence and Jean's angry face, nearly went mad. She missed the music more than any words could express, and she found herself thinking of, and longing for, the hours of rapturous forgetfulness which Jean's genius gave her. She tried hard to put this away from her, but she was very young and she had no help.

Even Simeon had forgotten her—that seemed clear. Since Chloe had returned he had not written to her once, but Chloe had mentioned his having

gone to call on her immediately upon her arrival. So her dawning feeling for Simeon turned back upon itself and all went to add to her suffering.

One night she had gone early to her room, unable to bear her mother's patient sighs. Moreover, she sometimes heard Jean playing if she came up-stairs in time, and to-night she longed for music. She lay down wrapped in a shawl on the outside of her bed. Snow was falling and a sort of reflected brightness relieved the darkness of her room.

Temptation of a subtle, unfair sort was upon her. What if she yielded! Her life looked black to her wherever she turned. Always, always her mother's personality must hinder and hobble her. She herself—would she not grow small and narrow, too? Was it not what she saw again and again about her? Was there any escape, unless she could bring herself to be cruel? And to please her mother—was not this a duty which would bring its own joy? If she could say "Yes"—only the word—months would pass, even years, maybe, before more would be expected of her. Meanwhile—who could tell—perhaps she would learn to like the idea—and she could have peace and her music. At the worst would not life lived with a great musician be better than

As she gave herself over to these thoughts there came the sound of his violin. He played as if he knew she were listening, and the music he played

any other life she was likely to find? And Jean was great. She believed it with almost his own conviction.

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seized and compelled her. It was not love music. It spoke of worlds and beauties above all mortal ken; it freed and perfected the wonders of her own soul; it lifted and inspired her. On and on it led, up and up; it raised her, heart and soul, far above the level of daily life. It promised unutterable things, teaching her to desire the unattainable, to struggle for it and to die in search of it. It spurned all she could oppose to it. Like pain itself, it could not be put aside; no reason had anything to do with it. It was there, speaking to her, claiming her, calling her. And because she had ears to hear, it told her she must accept all it might inflict. She must accept and hear and learn and achieve. She must free the god within her and follow with feet however weary, with heart however sad, where it led. All her flesh, all her mortal being, meant nothing but to serve it. And if she refused—thus it spoke to her and the sternness of ages was in its singing tones-she must bear with the fallen angels the failure which might have been victory, the eternal unrest that might have been peace. Could she face that?

With the question the music was stilled. Hild lay dreaming it over again. She knew what it had wrought. It was as if a miracle had descended upon her. Out of eternity a word had been spoken, a command had been issued. It was in her power to obey. To fail meant the ignoring of her soul. If it led her through a martyr's pain, go she must and could. It was not possible for her to hesitate or to

swerve. All her life she must listen for the repetition of that call. She did not know what it meant, she did not even know what it required of her. But she did know that no personal pain mattered, and that she must accept, must obey, must labor.

She moved away from the bed. Jean had begun to play again. Quietly she crept out of her door into the hall. Her mother was in their own little parlor and the stairs led down almost to Jean's door. She descended step by step, listening as she went. At his door she paused. Her muscles failed her. In her throat there rose a choking cry, and she put her fingers to her lips to keep it back. Then she turned the knob.

He stood with his back to her, playing by the light of a candle. His figure swayed as he played, so did the flame of the candle, so did the shadows in the room. It was a moment before he turned, feeling that some one watched him. When he saw her, her white face and shining eyes, he came nearer and shut the door for her.

"What is it?"

"I have come to say—I will marry you"—she lost her breath over the word—"whenever you wish."

He looked at her, looked her over from head to foot as one might any new belonging for the first time one's own. Then his eyes returned to her face.

"Was it Beethoven?" he asked her.

"Yes, ah yes. And I will be good. I will do all you say—all! I will be good."

"So!" he said. "You had better go to bed."

CHAPTER VI

THE first weeks after Jean's arrival in New York were so busy that he could only be happy or wrathful as his work satisfied or some one else's exasperated him. A certain prima donna, not good enough for the Metropolitan and too good for the ordinary comic opera, had formed a company of her own, and it was with her that George Everett had found a chance for Jean. Everett was a man of many parts. He owned a restaurant, ran a theatrical agency, dabbled in stocks and shares, and led a life which produced in him a hearty contempt for most things, one exception being musical talent. He was hand in glove with many operatic folk and right-hand man to Mme. Cavari; in fact, it was he who had proposed to her this venture, and she was only too pleased to take his advice as to her first violin.

As chance would have it, Mme Cavari, once upon a time Ellen Carey, of Maine, owned privately as her native place a hamlet not five miles from Beverly. When Everett arranged to have her see Jean she discovered from an inadvertent word his recent acquaintance with Beverly, and more upon her interest in all he had to say about the place than upon his musical qualifications he was engaged.

It meant good pay and more openings in the future, and the light opera she was to present had some good music in it, so Jean left her quite pleased with his morning's work.

From that time forward he was constantly occupied. There were rehearsals at all hours of the day and night and Jean threw his heart into the thing. Once or twice he courted disaster in disagreeing with the conductor on some matter of importance, and once, in the middle of a bar, he stopped short to upbraid his fellow-violinists in terms so decisive that Everett, who was present, was constrained to interfere. But Mme. Cavari liked him and said he accompanied her as perfectly as her heart-beats, so he came to no trouble.

But when the hardest work was over he began to feel lonely. He had taken a room in a down-town boarding-house. It had none of the personal touches, the air of belonging to some one which had made his room at Miss Massam's pleasant. It was like a lobby—a place where people passed through, but never stayed longer than they must. It was a musical house—in other words, it was frequented by musicians, and no one had a right to bang on any one else's door and say, "Stop that noise!" He had been obliged to move twice because he had been unlucky enough to become a neighbor to sounds that made day and night alike hideous to the sensitive Jean. But just now he was near a singing-teacher, who went to bed about the time he came in and who

had a room below for lessons, and an organist who rarely practised at home.

He still managed his own meals, as the arrangement was cheap and his hours irregular. Sometimes he dined or supped in cafés. He liked, distinctly liked, putting by his dollars, and there was so little that he cared for in the way of pleasure outside of his music that the little was really not worth the money. On the other hand, he did not know he was handling anything of value when it came to paying for a sheet of music he wanted or one of the rare books he read. He let his garments hang upon him until they would no longer keep out the cold. He wore the same blue tie, bought in Beverly at the advice of a combination of ladies, now frayed and exposing its white cotton lining. His teeth and hair grew dingy through neglect, and his hands were seldom more than half clean. He was altogether as shabby and unprepossessing a little musician as you would be likely to see. But those who heard him did not bother to see him, they only remembered that he was miraculously endowed with the gift of bestowing upon them glimpses of the unseeable, hints of the unknowable, a releasing of winged emotions which one could only know for one's own because they had their being in one's breast

Everett had given him a piece of advice early in his connection with the Cavari.

"You stick to her like a fly on a horse's ear!" he

counseled. "There may be a chance for you such as you'd give your eyes for. You can bank on me! Jest keep yer shirt on and don't get gay with that red devil ye've got betwixt yer own teeth."

Soon after the successful first night of "Perdita" Mme. Cavari asked Jean to come to her flat for supper. She had extended the invitation on impulse and perhaps regretted it when she shook hands with him in her drawing-room, for the first time seeing him against a polite background. Half a dozen people were already gathered together near the piano and Jean made the party complete. It was not long before he plunged suddenly into the conversation, and from that moment Cavari felt pleased that she had dared to introduce him into her circle.

The most notable figure in the room to Jean was a tall man, of emaciated features and deep-set, brilliant eyes, who leaned, talking little, on the piano. He was addressed as Hanbury, and it was evident that he dominated the minds of the group. When he spoke to Mme. Cavari he called her Nellie, and Jean could see that nothing pleased her so much as to hear him give an opinion or to see him laugh. There were, besides him, a poetic young man of unhealthy appearance, called Roger; a pretty actress; and a man and girl, brother and sister Jean found, by the name of Rale. Of these two the brother was the one who interested Jean, because he showed a genuine appreciation of music. The two were Southerners, Jean gathered, and Arthur Rale

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showed it, suggesting a creole, dark to swarthiness, full-lipped, and somber-eyed. Marcia, the sister, was appreciably the elder of the two, colored in a uniform brown, a woman who appeared to have lost interest in her own plainness and to have kept the bitterness of it in the twist of her dry lips. She moved with a kind of grace, and she gave to the general conversation acid comments, more or less acute, which had their value in the whole as a bitter spice may improve a cake.

During the evening Jean was induced to play, having brought his violin at Cavari's request. Before he had gone far he singled out from his listeners young Rale and Hanbury and played to them. Rale with lifted head and eager eyes, Hanbury with a sudden gathering together of his lax figure, told him their insight into the musical language he spoke. These two could understand whatever he liked to say to them.

It was during the progress of supper that Jean heard Cavari say to Hanbury:

"Has Fulton given in?"

"No."

"I thought not. You are worried!"

"You always know."

"Of course. Will you see him again?"

"There is no use. I must go to the men. It is the only way."

Young Rale, who had heard something of the dialogue, turned and said, with heat:

"Fulton is right. It's fight, fight, I tell you! They must get all they can. Heaven knows it's little enough."

Marcia spoke quickly:

"Are we going to have this all over again? Men may suffer and their families starve, but isn't it too much to ask that we should always be bored by discussing whether or not it might be prevented? Oh dear—they're off."

They were, indeed. Jean knew the jargon of socialism thoroughly. He would have called himself a socialist if any one had cared to know his politics. He did not regard the questions raised very seriously. He listened to young Rale's violence, Roger's sentiment, Marcia's ridicule, without interest, while he ate and relished his excellent meal. What caught his attention at last was the silence of Hanbury, who, like a bored but expert fencer, parried attack, but made no sally of his own. Gradually he saw that Hanbury held a position aloof from any attitude familiar to Jean. Arrested by the sense that something rather fine was withheld, Jean laid down his fork, wiped his mouth, and said, interrupting Roger:

"What is it that you think?"

As Hanbury smiled at him without answering, he asked again:

"I mean, I want what is in your mind. Do you not understand? Must I say more? You have much to say. Is it not so? Say it to me. I am listening."

Hanbury still smiled in silence and Mme. Cavari was watching him when Rale broke forth:

"Why, it's this way, Kontze. Hanbury's a dreamer, an idealist. I reckon there ain't another like him for hoping and working in the world. He's done more fine work than you'll ever hear of, but he fails because he looks for water in deserts, and good feeling in the hearts of men who spend their lives grinding the poor. He's chasir sunbeams, and it's no use. He expects to bring about a revolution in industrial conditions by getting everybody to make bows and pretty speeches to everybody else. He can't see that what a man has won by robbery he's not going to give up from pure kindness to his fellow-creatures. That's Hanbury."

Mme. Cavari flushed, and spoke coldly:

"Moderation is not your strong point, Arthur. Mr. Kontze, Mr. Hanbury is one of those misunderstood beings, a disinterested man. You have the

long and the short of it there."

"I think I begin to see," said Jean, thoughtfully. "We say, 'Give me this—give me that!' and we shout very loud and wave our hats when a man says it for us. Yes. And the more he tells us we ought to have the louder do we shout. Is it not so? We do not stop to wonder if it is just. No. A man with the loud voice tells us we should have it and we believe him. But if we ask for it? Then perhaps we get—what you call—'left.' And we curse and say we are oppressed! Has not the man with the loud voice told us so—very loud, indeed?"

For the first time Hanbury spoke:

"And the man with the loud voice makes a good thing of it. You may be sure of that. If the people did not hate and fear their masters where would he be? It is his business to make them demand what he knows will not be granted, so that, whatever they get, a feeling of resentment will be sure to remain with them. Let them ask what is just, let them ask first and then demand. There is no force on earth strong enough to keep it from them. I have watched and I know."

"Ah," said Jean, "Yes. But there are some wrongs that can never be made right. Is it not so? Are there not lives that have been wasted and spoiled? Will not some one have to answer sometime? No?"

For a moment Jean thought that Hanbury meant to answer him. A silence of expectancy lay upon them all. Feeling it, Hanbury glanced from face to face and, leaning back in his chair, shook his head. Cavari made the occasion to rise and led the way back to the drawing-room.

Jean walked for a part of his way home with the Rales. Marcia told him something of Hanbury. It seemed that no one knew much about him. Marcia believed that he was an Englishman by birth, but he had lived in many countries in touch with all classes. He had spent his life in the cause of labor and was now working for a concerted railway strike. The need of readjustment of wages and hours among railway employees was well known.

Hanbury promised the men success if they would follow him consistently. But lately he had been opposed by Fulton, the leader of the Amalgamated Union of Railway Workers, who wanted the men to stand out for better terms than Hanbury advised asking. Young Rale, Jean gathered, was devoted to Hanbury, but was impatient of his moderation.

"You know I am Mr. Hanbury's secretary," said Marcia. "I take down all his fine phrases in shorthand and am paid for it, so you can't expect me to see how very fine they are."

Young Rale asked Jean to come and see them and

gave him an address.

Strange to say, Jean remembered the invitation and took advantage of it. The house where Marcia had a tiny flat was near Jean's boarding-house, and Marcia would always give him a meal, and Rale never wearied of Jean's music. Jean learned, bit by bit, the story of the pair. Marcia had the best of Southern blood in her veins, but Arthur, her halfbrother, had been born of a pretty creole, the second wife of a broken gentleman whom the Civil War had left destitute and weakened in health. The second Mrs. Rale had no distinction of birth and small education. Her son developed a violent temper and a stubborn dislike of work. Marcia however, adored him, and when, after their father's death, their small patrimony was spent, she managed to support herself and him in their native city.

In time he found a place in a newspaper office and earned a meager salary. Then a great misfortune befell him. He became engaged to a girl, much his inferior socially, whom he nevertheless devotedly loved and who would have done much for him if she had not suddenly contracted tuberculosis and died. The circumstances of her death were particularly sad, as her life might have been saved if she had not struggled to keep her place as teacher in the high school long after she was too ill for work. An uncle had been approached about her, but nothing had been done until too late. This loss had loosened the mechanism of Arthur's mind disastrously. He had gone to the girl's uncle, who was a wealthy and influential citizen, and had used him so roughly that the city was no longer possible to the Rales. They had come to New York in straits and Hanbury and Mme. Cavari had befriended them. Arthur wrote occasional articles for a socialist paper, and Marcia labored for Hanbury, receiving a salary sufficient for their needs.

Jean was welcome to them for different reasons. Marcia welcomed him as she did anyone who could divert her brother. Arthur Rale adored Jean's genius and liked him. Both were lovely. Marcia was not a woman to attract friends, and Rale was too unhappy and suspicious to keep them. Jean, in his own way, avoided the worst of brother and sister and laid hands on the best. He had a fund of picturesque narrative which he expended for them

between long silences, during which the two men smoked and Marcia moved about the room, unresting as the wheels of a clock. She would sit still to listen to Jean's music and, when he talked of nights and days, scenes and people, unlike anything she knew, she followed his words, though they were not spoken to her. He had seen much that was grim, much that was sordid, but in listening Marcia could look through his words as if they were windows and she one who passed by them, seeing through them an interior which made her wish to see more. Arthur Rale fed on Jean's stories, for many of them drove home the facts of useless poverty and preventable crime.

An evening came in April when Jean found Marcia alone. He was so accustomed to the sitting-room shared by the Rales that he drew a chair to the window and, puffing at his pipe, watched the dusk deepen in the street below, while the lamps grew brighter. Marcia never attempted to entertain him, but to-night she came to stand by his elbow.

"Jean!" she said.

"Eh?" He looked up at her.

"I wish you'd do something for me."

"Something? What is it?"

"I wish you wouldn't tell Arthur about your life in Paris and London. It's upsetting him. I can tell! You know he's been unlucky. Well, he hates rich people. He used to be ashamed that his mother's brother was a cobbler. Now he boasts of it.

He's given up Hanbury and has taken up with men I know aren't safe. His mother went out of her mind before she died. They're all queer. Arthur is getting a fixed idea that anybody who has a carriage is his mortal enemy. I don't say that I don't hate them, too. I do; but I know enough to keep it under. Arthur doesn't."

"He is silly-yes. You are right. But many are silly. What I tell him-it is but truth. Myself-I do not know why truth should be unspoken. I cannot be troubled to be quiet when I wish to speak. No, I have never done so. I shall not begin."

Marcia lingered. She had not lighted the gas. Jean's thoughts held him unconscious of her till

she spoke again.

"What shall you do when 'Perdita' is taken off?" He frowned. The question, once realized, seemed to arrest him.

"I am considering," he said, thoughtfully.

"Didn't some one say you had a place in a roofgarden orchestra?"

"That! Oh yes. It was the other things which I

was considering."

Marcia was silent while Jean puffed regularly at

his pipe. After a moment he said:

"My life-it is not good. No. I have thought much and I see that it is uncomfortable. I cannot give myself to my work. There are too many things that trouble me. While I was in Beverly

I was used to having clean garments once a week. It was agreeable, I do not deny it. Miss Massam used to put them out for me. You-do you put out clean clothes for your brother? Yes? I thought so. It is surprising how women think to do these things. That is only one trouble which distracts me. There are others. Sometimes I buy one dozen eggs. They are cheaper that way. You have noticed? Yes? And then I forget where I have put them till they begin to smell and then they are no longer good. Is it not so? My room-it is too small to hold everything, especially eggs that smell. I throw them away, but the smell remains. It is not agreeable, no, and it is very expensive. Now what I wish to ask you is this, Miss Rale. What money does it cost you to rent this flat and buy food? See. I will be business-like. I will put it down on paper. So."

While Marcia gave him the figures Jean put them down on a soiled envelope which he drew from his pocket. When he had added the items he nodded

gravely.

"It is as I thought," he said. "It is a good thing for a man to marry, Miss Rale. Yes, I have proved it. To marry a woman who is sensible and can cook!

Yes—it is good."

Arthur Rale, opening the door at the moment put a stop to the conversation, and Jean stirred himself to give them music. The three had a supper, cooked by Marcia in the chafing-dish, and it was

late before Jean went away, leaving the brother and sister together.

"What was Jean saying to you!" asked Rale,

bluntly, as Marcia began to clear off the table.

"When?"

"You know when. Look here, Marcia, no fooling. I like Jean, but you're my sister and I've got to look after vou."

Marcia might have smiled, but she didn't.

"Do you like him?" persisted Rale.
"Of course I do. Don't you? Would I let him come here if I didn't like him? He takes my mind off things."

"Well, what was he saying?"

"I don't see why I've got to tell you, and I won't. Don't you meddle, Art. What's the use of being old and ugly if you can't look after yourself! There's a good deal more sense in my asking what he says to you. I don't like your hours and I don't like your friends. Hanbury was all right—he's a man, and a great one, too. I don't care what you do for him. But when it comes to a lot of shouting, ranting anarchists-"

"Sh!"

"They're nothing else, and I know it. I don't suppose Jean has anything to do with that, but he's

leading you on just the same."

Arthur turned a sullen face away from her. had succeeded in diverting his thoughts, and he did not notice that her face kept the color his questioning had raised.

When Iean returned to his hall bedroom he sat down to think. It was all bed, that room, and the bed was never fresh, for he had to sit on it, put his feet on it, dump books and papers on it, use it in all manner of ways. His thoughts to-night made a list of his discomforts which he took as arguments for marriage. The thought of it had been with him ever since his pay had been raised and his summer work secured. Mme. Cavari had reassured him in regard to the future. Certainly the matter was worth considering. He thought of Hild, her presence seeming more real beside his memory of Marcia. Not one of Hild's beauties escaped his thought any more than Marcia's flatness and brownness had escaped him earlier. The thought of Hild caused him to feel a pleasant excitement which remained for several days. At their termination an impetus was given to him in the form of a letter from Mert Massam. It was a masterly composition in brevity and pith.

Told you American eagle likes to grab and scoop.

Seen 'em out by Si Watson's fence talking rot.

Better come hum.

MERT.

Following this he received a pathetic little note from Hild asking if he was sure he wanted to marry so young and ignorant a girl as she. Mrs. Emery also wrote that Simeon Pierce was in town, but was leaving that day, and that Hild had not seen him. Jean's comment on her letter might not have pleased

her. "Fool woman!" he breathed. Mert had evidently not been dreaming. Jean sat down and with the assistance of his pipe attacked the situation.

First—was he prepared to lose Hild?

He didn't suppose it made much difference if he married Hild or another, provided the other was as gifted, as healthy, and as young and pretty as Hild. But, his shrewdness speaking, he realized that Hild was very gifted, very healthy, and young and pretty, and that he was used to her, and that he knew no one else now and had never known any one else at any time who had pleased him so consistently. Characteristically it did not strike him that even if there were another she might not be willing to marry him.

No, he was not prepared to lose Hild. He wanted her. He thought for a moment of having her there at his hand, to kiss if he liked, to do with as he would, a woman his own. Even the dreadful baby obtruded upon his thoughts as something not wholly obnoxious. Of course women ought to have babies; it was good for them, it made them domestic and obedient. With babies and music and housework she wouldn't have time for any foolishness. That was the great thing.

This question settled, another took its place.

Could he trust her to wait?

In America, he began to see, an engagement did not have the binding finality of a German betrothal. Moreover, all influence was against him. Suppose

this fellow, the earless puppy, got hold of her and persuaded her she was in love with him! What could he count on to hold her? Clearly only possession, and possession was only secured by matrimony.

Decidedly he would be unwise to trust her to wait. Having got so far, it came to a matter of ways and

means.

Jean searched in the top drawer of his bureau, turned over piles of dirty collars, frayed ties, torn papers, sheets from letters and music, and odds and ends of all kinds until he found his bank-book. This he studied with care. The result was not unsatisfactory. Not much there, to be sure, but enough to buy a little furniture and still keep a bit for illness or necessity of any kind. Putting away the bank-book, he began to figure carefully on a slip of dirty paper. He put down the items one below another, bending long over the puzzle. Then he went back and cut down here and there till the total pleased him. Then he laid his pencil aside.

He could easily leave after the opera on Saturday night and be back in time for his work on Monday night. They could be married sometime on Sunday

or early Monday.

That night he wrote his plans to Mrs. Emery.

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CHAPTER VII

THE flat which Jean had selected for his initial experiment in housekeeping was a minute affair, advertised as "Four rooms and a bath." Hild and he had spent the first few days of their marriage in his boarding-house while they purchased and disposed their limited furnishings, and one warm spring evening they moved in.

The street, which farther west or east took on a well-to-do air, here lapsed into a sordidness which did not suggest real poverty. Gaily dressed ladies emerged from the doors of numberless apartment-houses, but the children who had gathered in the street on this warm night were untidy, dirty, even ragged. Dressmakers' signs were many, and the whole toneless, flat-faced street seemed to strive continually to disguise and repress its teeming life, with ill success.

A green dusk was deepening as Jean let Hild and himself into the house. He had taken a flat at the top of the building to escape noise, and they began to mount the narrow stairway in silence. As they passed closed doors Hild listened for the snatches of life behind them—a harsh voice speaking unpleasant words over the clashing of kitchen things;

some one shouting directions down a dumb-waiter shaft; the cry of a child in a bad temper; laughter, strident and high; and once the sound of a woman's voice, singing. Another key let them into their own suite and Hild was at home.

There was a tiny square hall, its walls full of doors which gave on the rooms of Hild's domain. There was a piano in the living-room which was to be paid for on the instalment plan. They had spent what was necessary to buy a good instrument, and what was left they divided between the other furnishings. Hild had been given as wedding-presents three or four rugs, a rocking-chair, a morris chair, and a few sofa cushions which were piled now on a divan between the windows. Her household linen, bought by her mother and stitched by herself, lay in a cupboard ready to use.

Jean had found a note in the slot below their speaking-tube at the street door. He read it now. It was an invitation to himself and Hild to come to supper with Mme. Cavari that night after the theater. He handed it to Hild. As he directed her where to meet him her eyes rested on his. This had happened before in the last few days, and whenever it happened it disturbed Jean. Now he took her arms, firm and round under her silk sleeves, in his grasp and looked at her. She was not, no, certainly she was not what he had hoped she would be. The housewife, all competence and obedience, was not here. To be sure, she was only a girl, and he had

never known a girl before. He had known many women, and he could not imagine having to explain anything to one of them. Hild, unlike them, seemed to be constantly looking for explanations. He did not like the feeling this gave him. He had bound himself to a larger kind of child and would have to teach her. How long would it be before he found looking into those brown eyes, the comfortable submissiveness he wished to see?

"Why look at me so?" he demanded. "Mon Dieu! I forbid it!"

He dropped her arms and turned his back on her. Then, as she stood still, he faced her again.

"Did you not marry me?" he asked her, spreading out his hands.

"Yes, I did," she answered.

Even now she could not realize that the step was finally taken. Against her wish the marriage-day had been fixed; against her will it had come. Incredulous of their reality, she had seen her wedding-garments laid on a spareroom bed. Shrinking, she had helped to unpack and arrange her wedding-gifts. Hating herself, she had gone to the station to meet Jean, surprised when she saw him. With haste in which she seemed to swim, dimly aware of objects near her, the crucial moment had come and gone. When the train that bore her away to new things had begun to roll faster and she had turned her face from the window she had been afraid to look at Jean.

"Then," said Jean, "if it is true that you have

married me am I to be looked at so? No! I say it—no!" He stamped his foot.

Hild looked down at her folded hands.

"Is it for nothing that I work to feed and clothe you? I ask you. After so many years of miserable life I ask a little comfort. Am I not ready to pay for it? Do I not take you away from earless puppies and foolish women and give you this?" He indicated with a generous sweep of his arm the little bare room. "Do I not share with you all things? I am a genius, a man of music, and I require peace; some one to do the things I do not like to do; some one to talk to when I am sad, to play for me, to do what I say. You are my wife and all this—it is your duty. It is not your duty to look at me with eyes that I remember. No. Understand what I say."

Hild did not speak. Jean stamped his foot again. "Is it to a dumb woman I talk?" he shouted. "Can

you not look at me?"

There had been time for thought in the few days of Hild's marriage, and Hild, sometimes made stupid by suffering, had come to moments when she could think. At one of these moments she had considered going home. It had seemed to her then the only possible decision. To remain with Jean had appeared a horrible kind of suicide. But other moments had followed with other thoughts. She had lived her life with a woman who had "gone home." She knew what it meant. It meant failure, and failure meant pity, and pity to Hild would be as

vinegar to her wounds. More pressing than this thought came the appreciation of the bargain of her marriage. Jean had not married her because he loved her. He had married her for definite considerations which she had tacitly agreed to fulfill. Pride, to which her young growth had been bound, fixed her decision. She did not know how it was to be done, but she meant to please Jean.

She looked up and, though her lips were stiff, she

smiled.

"It's time for you to go," she said. "I'll meet

you as you say."

When he left her she turned quickly to her unpacking. She kept her hands and mind busy until it was time to go. The unfamiliar streets perplexed her. She was relieved when Jean joined her outside the theater. She talked to him more naturally than she had been able to do since their marriage as they walked to Cavari's apartment.

Mme. Cavari had something of a party. Hanbury was there, also the Rales. Jean had told Cavari the bare fact of his marriage, but he had not prepared her for Hild. It seemed to the girl that she stood alone, stared at, for a long time before Mme. Cavari took her warmly by the hand and led her into the

room.

"This is Mme. Kontze," she said to Hanbury, who had come forward. "My dear, this is my best friend, Mr. Paul Hanbury."

Hild, looking up, saw a face which held her eyes

raised. She tried to fix her mind on what he said, but failed. She kept only an impression that he had been very kind, and that he watched her as she turned away. She saw Jean speak to Arthur Rale and Marcia. Soon Marcia introduced herself to Hild.

"Have you ever been in New York before?" asked Marcia, rather cruelly it seemed to Hild.

"No. You see, Boston seemed a long way to me."

"Oh, well, I'm sorry for you. That's all."

"I don't think it matters much where you live," said Hild.

"Oh, don't you!" Marcia laughed unpleasantly. "Everything makes a difference when you're wretched."

"Does it?" asked Hild, interested, because here was some one who was wretched, too. She looked to see if Marcia were really unhappy and saw the plain face before her clearly for the first time. So the two women came to understand each other for a passing moment.

Cavari, later in the evening, drew Jean aside.

"So you're married!" she said, watching Hild.

"Yes. It is true. Why not?"

"How old is she?"

"Eighteen!"

"Good God, Jean Kontze! Have you no heart?" He turned on her, exasperated.

"What you mean-have I no heart?"

"Hadn't the child a mother?"

"Certainly. She is a foolish woman."

"You don't need to tell me that!"

"I do not know what it is you mean to say. Women—they are peculiar. It's no use to look to them for sense. I have found it so."

"Poor little girl! Poor little girl!"

Jean took up her words.

"Poor little girl! What you talk of? You say 'Poor little girl' and she looks the same! Why should I not marry her? Why should she not like it? Tell me that."

Cavari shrugged her shoulders.

"It is no use to try to get sense from a woman," murmured Jean.

On the way home Hild tried to find out something of Hanbury, but Jean was not communicative.

"I don't like Miss Rale," said Hild.

"No? She is very ugly."

"Her brother is a queer boy."

"He likes to hear me play."

"Jean, what is Mr. Hanbury to Madame Cavari?"

"How can I tell? Why should I trouble to know? It is their own business."

Hild, thinking of her words and his answer, was too

shy to explain her meaning.

When they reached their rooms Jean took out his violin to play. Hild came to the doorway and asked, in a low voice:

"Shall I unpack your valise?"

He nodded without looking at her.

She sighed over the untidy contents of the bag. As she began to take out the articles one by one something arrested her. It was the broken and faded photograph of a woman. Hild knew, looking at it, that it was a picture of Jean's mother.

Suddenly Hild became conscious of a new feeling, painful and sweet. She could not, for a moment, be sure of it, then, as she looked at the dimly reflected face in her hand, it strengthened.

She was, yes, she was sorry for the man she had married.

CHAPTER VIII

ME. CAVARI had promised that when Jean had finished the symphonic poem on which he was at work she would introduce him to a musical director of note who owed her a favor. Cavari was deeply interested in the progress of the composition, but Hild and Arthur Rale were the only two persons privileged to actually follow it in the process of creation. On many an evening of that summer Rale came and went unquestioned, almost unnoticed, while Jean worked. Marcia never came, and Jean had not been to the Rales' rooms since his marriage. Hild knew that Marcia did not like her. She was too preoccupied to ask herself why.

The trials of that summer brought Hild along the hard way from the "I can't bear it" of inexperience to the "I must bear it" of the initiated. Her resolution to adapt her life to its conditions, however difficult they might be, had seemed to her the irresistible force before which any movable body must give way. She was humiliated to find that this was not true. Jean's sharp words, however sternly she might prepare herself for them, sent her quivering away, to cry, to vainly rebel, always to end by hating herself for caring and for showing that she cared.

She knew what he wanted. Why in the name of pride could she not give it to him and keep locked away all the finer sense he did not prize?

In the list of her difficulties her inexperience in household matters had an important place. She did not know how to cook, but if Jean had been ignorant, too, she could have brought more courage to the task of learning. He, on the contrary, could tell her with great definiteness just what was wrong with her steak or pudding. Many a dreadful hour of that unthinkable summer was spent over the mysteries of her gas-range.

But worst of all her petty worries was the applying of their money to their needs. She began, like many American girls, without the least sense that money counted for anything when exchanged for what she wanted. The difference between a steak that cost thirty cents and a chicken that cost seventyfive seemed nothing. In her desire to please Jean she thought to cater to his palate by buying delicacies, and, instead, she brought violent words, like a swarm of hornets, about her ears. She did not forget, but it was long before she gained any perspective on the spending of money. They were poor, and the allowance which Jean dealt out to her was just enough, with care and foresight, to feed them frugally and pay a weekly wash and char woman. During one memorable week Hild served roast squab on Monday, and the pair went meatless Friday and Saturday.

The weather was such for a great part of those bridal months that it pressed gasping humanity into the parks, open cars, and river-boats. Everything in the tormented city bore out Hild's idea that she lived in a fevered dream. Most of the decent women had fled with their children or their ailments to the sea, the mountains, or at least the suburbs, and in their place appeared lurid creatures who caricatured the latest fashions and languished over out-door tables at popular restaurants.

There was something during this dreary time which kept her intent on her life. When Jean brought her into his work, asking her advice and sympathy, going over with her the points he wished to make, the obstacles he wished to overcome, they stepped at once over the borders of the country where they were exiled and alone, into a land where they shared freedom and lavish beauty. Then she could talk to him eagerly, naturally, and he could meet her, lead her, win her. They were, at such times, companions in a sense which was wonderful and new to Hild. They were companions traveling together where sights and sounds were of heavenly import.

Such hours passed, and, once passed, were hard to credit in the face of loneliness, bitterness, gloom. Once in a while a glance or word or the sense of a silence gave Hild hope. She persisted through blind discouragement and violent despair and came

to have a spirit of emotional adventure, like the patience of a trained traveler.

Mme. Cavari came to see Hild one afternoon at the hour when Hild was sitting down for practice. The lady glanced about the room, noting the scattered music, shabby with use; the modern piano, the best to be bought for money; the full bookcase, apart from which various things the room had only a coolness and neatness to offer for attraction. She turned over the music that lay on the piano and talked to Hild, asking questions which the girl answered diffidently. Cavari warmed to Jean's praise. Then she mentioned Hanbury.

"He almost never speaks of people," she said. "He thought your husband a genius. He asked me

'a great deal about you both."

"I thought he was just splendid," exclaimed Hild, blushing at the fear that she had spoken too warmly.

"So he is, just that—splendid." Mme. Cavari looked at Hild, and sighed. "Too splendid," she added.

"Oh! How can anybody be too splendid?"

"I mean—well, when you know him better you will find out what I mean. As for me, you know I

owe him everything."

Hild thought that Mme. Cavari did not look like a person who owed anybody anything. She longed to ask what she meant, but did not dare. Mme. Cavari went on to say:

"I was a servant in a country hotel. He heard

me sing and brought me to New York. He supported me for years, while I was studying here and abroad. Even that was misunderstood. People thought I was his mistress," Cavari explained quite simply. "Plenty of them think so still."

"How awful!"

"Oh, that doesn't matter half so much as some other things. But it's a sample of the kind of mistake they do make about Paul. He does a godlike thing and they interpret it as a commonplace one if they can, and if they can't they call him mad."

"Oh!"

"Of course a few of us know him. It's only another way of saying we worship him. Can you play this, Madame Kontze?"

Hild could and did. One result of Jean's exactions as a teacher was that she would never be nervous playing for any one else.

"My dear child, you are a bundle of surprises," Cavari cried. "You play far better than Irma Dene.

You must become a professional."

"You see I have to play well for Jean," Hild ex-

plained, putting away the music.

"I see." Mme. Cavari was studying Hild with a good deal of interest. "What else do you do for Jean, and do you do everything as well as you play Bach?"

"Oh dear no." Hild blushed. "If I could cook as well as I can play the piano I should be perfectly happy," she finished, earnestly.

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"I see," repeated Cavari. "Do you sing, too?" "Oh no—that is, I have no method."

Cavari rose and took Hild's hands, one in each of her own.

"I must go now," she said, "but I by no means wish to lose sight of you, my dear. As soon as 'Perdita' is over I am going to my house at Annanville. I hope you'll visit me there. Will you? That's right. Whether Jean can come with you or not, remember. By the way, I met a Beverly boy the other day who says he knows you. My lawyer introduced him, and seems to think well of him. His name is Pierce."

"Simeon."

"I expect so. You will talk to Jean about that visit?"

She left Hild pleased and happy. The prospect of the visit Cavari had spoken of was too delightful to look upon for very long. It lent romance to the present, and as Hild stepped about her rooms, busy with her evening tasks, she could see hope in the very saucepans. In her enthusiasm she burned the potatoes and put too much vinegar in the salad, and Jean protested in voluble French, but so persistent was the influence of her mood that she smiled on him shyly and turned her attention to making him a super-excellent cup of coffee.

In July "Perdita" was taken off for a time. Jean had engaged to conduct a roof-garden orchestra during the two months or so of rest that Cavari wanted. Then "Perdita" was to be resumed.

One morning in August an unfortunate chance brought Hild face to face with Simeon Pierce. She had been marketing. Her arms were full of parcels and her face was more flushed than was comfortable or becoming. She shook hands with him, rebelling at all these circumstances. He would, she was sure, write home to Beverly that he had seen her and that she looked "awfully used up," and there would somewhere in the letter be an allusion to "that Kontze."

Simeon had been hurrying to catch an express train at the "L" station, but he took Hild's parcels from her and walked with her down the street where she lived.

"I wish you'd let me come to see you sometime," said Simeon.

Hild thought of a lamp in her sitting-room which cast a pink light, and she thought of a muslin dress she had never worn.

"Come along if you want to," she said. "I'm going to Annanville to-morrow to visit Madame Cavari."

"Are you? That's funny. I'm going down to Everett's for Sunday. He lives near her, I think. Say, Hild, can I come to-night?"

"If you want to."

As Hild mounted the long stairs—there was plenty of time to think on those stairs—a sense of guilt deepened in her mind. She had engaged to have a secret from Jean, for she found that she did not dare tell him that Simeon was coming. She

opened the door with her latch-key and, hearing the sound of Jean's violin, she hung her hat in the hall and went to the kitchen.

When she came into the living-room, carrying the midday meal, Jean was unapproachable. He made her put down his food and eat her own while he worked on, and then while she was putting her kitchen to rights he took his meal. He worked, absorbed, the entire day, but just before supper he called her into the room and showed her, with excited eyes, a page of music. "You will copy it for me to-night?" he asked. "Ah, Hild, it is going to be sweet-the singing to ears that will hear. And you will be there-yes-and you will know you are the wife of a great man. Listen"-he caught up his violin and played to her, watching her smile and bend toward him, entranced. "It is great—yes?" he cried. "It will hold them—yes?" Then his expression changed, and he came nearer to her, looking down at her young sweetness. He put his arms around her, and kissed her quickly where the curve of her neck vanished into the low collar of her dress.

She moved about him that evening, waiting on him with shrinking care. For his mood was the one she dreaded. He caught her hands and kissed them, laughing at her dismay when he made her drop a dish she carried. He made her sit on his knee and would not let her go, though the coffee was growing cold. He was roughly affectionate, and mussed her fresh linen gown which she had been at pains to iron the

night before. She resisted in vain, for he liked to hold her while she tried again and again to leave him. He was like a small boy teasing a kitten, and Hild's womanly dignity was injured. She was shy of her husband, and the frame of mind which made her seem all his—as much as his watch chain—was inexplicable to her. She was not all his. She knew it. What he won he could have and keep; what he had not won she did not mean to give up lightly. If he sensed it some day and chose to go in search of it—even then it was hers to give or keep.

When at last he left her for his night's work she was out of temper and tired. She liked him better when he scolded her. To scold her, she had come to tell herself, was within his rights, since she had undertaken to please him. But to treat her as if she were a pet dog, to fondle or curse, was not within his rights. To put it out of her mind she sat down to copy the score, and this was how Simeon found her. She had forgotten to change her dress or even to smooth her hair, but she was brilliantly pretty, a Hild at once different from the old Hild, and a finer presentment of her. He looked at her again, and then turned his eyes away for very shame at his own emotion.

Up to their meeting this morning they had last seen each other on the spring night when Simeon had used all his wit and his passion to persuade Hild to break her engagement. They remembered that evening now. Her hand, crushed and hot, had lain

in his. She had left him suddenly, as if she feared him, running from him up the walk and into the house. He had never seen her alone since then until to-night. To-night, for Simeon, was too late.

"I can't believe that you're married," he said,

brusquely.

Hild laughed, glancing around the room.

"Have you seen Chloe lately?" she asked.

"No."

"You used to go often enough."

"Oh! that—that was because—"

"Why?",

"You know, Hild."

"No, I don't." Then, understanding him, Hild bent her head over her work. She did not know how to break the silence that followed her words. At last she said, "Are you getting on, Simeon—your work, I mean?"

"Yes, well enough."

"Oh, what a way to talk! As if you didn't care!"

"Maybe I'll care some day. Don't you worry about that, Hild. Only— Say, Hild, are you

happy?"

As she looked at him she was suddenly ashamed. Perhaps her marriage had educated her somewhat, for she began to understand what the losing of her meant to Simeon. The knowledge was wonderful, and she sat, silent, regarding it with wide eyes. Her tremor had nothing to do with Simeon. Something big and splendid was in sight, something she might

conceivably experience. But Simeon did not understand that this was all she felt.

"Are you happy?" he repeated.

Hild wished passionately to say "Yes," so that he should believe her. She knew that he meant everything that could be implied by the question. And he had made clear to her how far from such happiness she was.

"What a funny question!" said Hild. "Of course I am."

She knew that he read into her words a meaning they did not hold. He saw that her marriage was a yoke, and he went on to suppose that marriage with him would have been something better. She hurried to say, "I'm awfully proud of Jean."

"Ah! Proud!"

"Yes, proud." Hild raised a defiant head.

"What's the use of being proud? Oh, Hild, Hild!"

Hild gave him a despairing glance.

"If I'd thought you'd have been so horrid—" she threw out.

"I'll go if you want."

"I think you better."

"Hild! If we were only back in Beverly. Or else—if I could forget the shadows on the grass—and your white dress."

But Hild looked at him with clear eyes.

"Oh, you'll forget," she said. "It's no use. Only—I am sorry. Really I am, Simeon."

He took her hand and while he looked at her he said:

"Just think. I could pick you up and carry you away. It would be easy. But I mustn't. I've got to say good-by."

"Are you going?"

She held her breath, listening till the door closed behind him. Then she said aloud:

"I've got to tell Jean. I've got to."

CHAPTER IX

HILD had been counting for weeks on her visit to Cavari. It had been arranged most easily in a second visit of the singer's. Jean had been present and at the suggestion Hild's glance had tried her own case, going for evidence to his face, and the verdict given carelessly in a, "Yes, if she wishes," came with all the effectiveness of a relief from suspense.

Since then—until the letter had come settling the date for the visit—Hild had not spoken of it, so greatly had she feared it would not come about. She had handed the letter to Jean to read, and he had done so, and she had considered the matter settled and had gone forward with her plans until, as has been seen, the evening of her departure arrived. She wondered now how she could have endured the stretch of summer which remained without this break and change. She even began to wonder how she was to find courage to come back. The prospect of a week's propinguity with Cavari, seven perfect days of rest and freedom, all that time in which she might completely put aside the strain and stress of a life where nothing spontaneous must encroach, this seemed to her the respite without which she could

not have gone on a moment longer. Simeon's handprints on her soul only intensified the desire to get away, to know again what it was to be unassailably alone within four walls.

She packed her trunk, taking for the first time a pleasure in the sight of two pretty unworn evening gowns. There were numerous small activities to keep her moving about her room so that there should be nothing left to do on the eve. Jean had said she might go-he had not seemed to care much whether she went or not. But she must certainly not worry him with her preparations. She struggled valiantly over her trunk to close it. She would not have liked to ask Jean to help her.

Too excited to sleep, she exchanged her day gown for a loose muslin negligée and, looking about to see that all was complete, she saw her purse lying on the bureau. She opened it and counted the money. Six dollars and a quarter! It was house money and she could not use it for her trip. Last week she had managed the accounts on less than usual, and had returned to Jean proudly a dollar and a half. She had been pleased. Of course he would have to give her her fare to Annanville and enough to tip the servants. She had forgotten that. It would be quite expensive, but she could make it up somehow.

As she mused she heard Jean at the door. She knew so well just what he would do that her hearing detected the pause in the hall for the casting off of his

hat, and then the scratch of a match as he set alight his cigarette. She could hear him cross the livingroom, and she knew he sat down at the little table which was spread for him with his late repast, which she rarely shared with him. She would wait a little, and then she would go in and speak to him about the money. It was a better time than in the morning, she knew.

She began to take down her hair, plaiting it in two long braids. Even she could see how childlike her face showed between her two bands of hair. She was pretty—so pretty that Hild, who was not a vain girl, was innocently struck by her own prettiness. Then she, not so innocently, yielded to a sense of resentment that there was no one to please with it. Jean would have found her as satisfying, she believed, if she had been coarse-skinned and dumpy. If she had been coarse-skinned and dumpy maybe she would have been a better cook, and then he certainly would have liked her better. She didn't think he often looked at her at all—he looked over her or on her, but never at her with all his seeing soul.

She was nervous and frightened, though she did not admit it to herself. She had never before had to ask Jean for money for any personal needs. A small sum given her by her mother on her weddingday, and only exhausted lately, had served every purpose.

At last she could postpone the moment no longer. Jean would have finished his supper and perhaps

begin to play, when it would be too late. She exerted her will, and expelled her own person abruptly into the room where Jean sat, his mouth full, his coat and waistcoat removed, bent on the business of relieving his hunger. On the table beside him lay a large cloth-bound volume, and Hild, looking at it in sudden apprehension, saw that it was a collection of Tchaikovsky's symphonies, for which he had longed yearned. She had yearned for the book, too, but to-night she hated the sight of it. She knew it made the task before her more difficult.

She came slowly toward him and, facing him across the very table on which Simeon's head had lain two hours ago, she sat down.

"Jean, you know I'm going to Annanville tomorrow."

He stopped eating and looked at her.

"And you will have to give me five dollars, I'm afraid."

He had forgotten all about it—she saw that. It was like him to forget. His mind was full of his music—he applied every part of his mentality to it. Only when he was tired, unfit for work, or in odd moments between the laying down and the taking up of his unvarious pursuits, did he have time for her affairs.

"Five dollars?" He looked at her a moment and then, waving his hand with finality, "No," he said, and put a huge portion of bread and cheese between his teeth.

Hild knew that she was paling. His short word appalled her. There was no telling him what it meant to her. Even if she could tell him, he would not care. It did not matter to him what she felt. He did not love her nor she him, and so he had nothing to lose. He could go on demanding service from her just the same, whatever rebellion raged within her. If he had loved her she would then have had some power to match his. Her pain would have been his pain. He did not care!

"Madame Cavari is expecting me. We must not offend her," she said, slowly, achieving calmness as

by a miracle.

"I have the money for a telegram," said Jean.

"Then what shall I wire?"

"What you like—truth or lies. A woman can always lie."

"Why do you refuse me-you told me I might

go---''

"Did I? How can I remember? I have not the money. I saw the symphonies and I had enough to buy them, so I did, and now—you see!" He showed her the small silver he carried in his pocket, letting it fall with the sound of metal on wood. A copper penny rolled across the table into her lap.

"My trunk is packed and locked," said Hild, and when no answer came to her words she got up and moved away. It was impossible to face him longer. She wanted to snatch the food away from him, she wanted to lay violent hands on the book of music, she

wanted to tell him she hated him and would not submit to him a moment longer. But the habit of silencing her impulses held her, and when she came back to his side she was angrier than before, with an anger that thought and schemed.

He had finished his supper and rose. She brought him his slippers, and he went to his fiddle, fingering it, but not playing. She took the dishes out to the kitchen on a tray, and washed the plate he had used. Then, to his apparent surprise, she came back.

"I am going to-morrow," she said from the door.

He shrugged his shoulders, smiling. Her color failed.

"I thought I'd tell you," she added.

He went on fingering the instrument.

"Women—they say these things. They think they mean them," Hild heard through the twanging of a string.

"Well, I mean it," said Hild, "and I've got something else to tell you. Simeon Pierce was here to-night."

Jean was arrested by this. She was devilishly glad to see him turn on her.

"The puppy, the earless puppy? You tell me so?"

Hild made no answer. She stood her ground.

"He came—and you turned him out—yes?"

"He came because I told him he might."

"The girl jokes," said Jean.

"You can say what you like and think what you

like. He came—I told him he could. I made up

my mind to tell you."

For a moment Hild thought Jean would throw his violin down. But he laid it carefully on the piano before his trembling hands clutched his head. The words she could follow stirred her temper high.

"Shall I be forced to lock you into a room?" he asked her, coherently, at last. "Is it thus you keep your place? Yes! I am to work, so, and earn money, and you are to sit at home and talk to young men. It is not for this I married. No. I shall know how to prevent it. Yes."

"How?"

Jean laughed. "You think I will not find a way? I will tell you one thing. I am a man, and you are a woman, and no woman in all the world can treat me as you think you can. It may be that I was mistaken to marry you. It may be that you do not know the business of being a wife. But you are a woman, and you can be taught. I am a man and I know how to teach you."

He put a heavy hand on her shoulder, and as he did so he looked at her. She met his eyes fairly with her hard and angry glance. He had managed to rouse every fierce feeling of which she was capable. A sigh sounded on her lips, telling better than any word the revulsion of her spirit at his touch. Even then he spoke on, scarcely seeing or hearing her.

"And you will go away—yes? And I am to be housemaid and cook in four empty rooms? I mar-

ried for this? That my wife should go and pay visits, and I should stay at home and work. I thought you began to see. I thought-"

Suddenly he stopped short in his speech. A quiver of expression had lighted Hild's face so plainly that even Jean saw the hate and fear in it.

"Oh!" she said. "Oh! Take your hand away."

She straightened her freed shoulder and spoke, while he watched her, words she had not known were

hers to speak.

"How dare you! How dare you speak to me so!" she demanded. "Aren't you afraid to? Do you know anything-anything at all? Well, I'll just tell you! I married you because I was so young and silly that I didn't know what I was doing. I might have fallen in love-you never seem to think of that. I've never even heard you speak of love. There is such a thing, just the same, and you've put it out of my life for ever and ever. I'm only just beginning to learn what it means. Don't you think any woman hates the man who does that? You took me when anybody would have done as well. You never thought of my side of it. You've punished me over and over for my foolishness, as if it were sin. I've put up with everything, and tried to be brave and tried to do my part through it all. But do you know how I've felt? Why, there've been times when you came into the room when I wanted to kill you for it. There've been times when I could have kissed the

door that shut you out. I've let you kiss me when I'd rather you'd kicked me. And you've never even seen a fraction of it. You've believed I belonged to you! Do I? I'll work for you, but as long as I live I'll never pretend to love you, and if you come near me you'll always know I'm hating you and wishing we were both dead!"

Only when the words were out had she time to be frightened. She had shattered something, and the sharp fragments lay between them, too dangerous to cross. She could see him more plainly than she had ever seen him before. She mistook the expression on his face for anger. It was not anger; he could not have named the emotion, for it was new and mixed with much that he did not understand. Yet through it all she was his woman and it was intolerable that she should defy him.

"So!" he said, quietly. "This—it is the way you fee!!"

He turned away and sat down on the piano stool, looking, somewhat vacantly, at the window. Then he picked up his fiddle and without glancing at Hild he spoke, not wholly to her:

"You say you are not mine. Is that not foolish? If you go away, where is your life? You were a child. I took you; I married you; I have taught you to think and to be careful. I could leave you—I could go away with my violin and a little money, and should I remember you? No. Very soon you would be nothing. But you! Only one other thing

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can make you not mine. If you belong to another. And shall I let another take you? No. It is always the same with women. My mother-I saw her live and die. My father, he did not love her-oh no. She worked for him, eh-but she worked for him! He did not care when she died-except-she used to listen to his music. I can remember that he beat her sometimes. And yet when I asked her to come away with me she laughed and she told me, 'Should I be happier? Jean, shall I change suffering for that which is worse?' You see, to give up she could not. She could only die. I've seen women since, and I do not think women are often happy. No, the happy ones are they who work for men or for children. Your mother—is she happy? Where is her worry? Why is she not? Because she is a woman without a man. I married you, it is true—and you are young so! You might have married some one else? That also is true, and you might have married a man who would spoil you, make of you what you are not-a parasite—one who lives on others' work. And you might have had fine clothes like rich men's mistresses. Ah yes, and you might have had money to go to Europe. I have seen such women there. But I-I do not think those women count. I do not think they are the happy. I think my mother took more out of life than they. It is the way for a woman to be great, and it is not the way for a man. I-for me-eternal work, it is what I want. I do not believe in God-your God with the long white

beard I saw in your mother's Bible. No, I believe in something great; and the beauty in me that cries to be sung is just a part of it, and not to give it outthat is sin, and sin brings, not your hell, but eternal death. The human flesh of me-that needs food and care. So far you have meant that. To-night, somehow, you seem more. You touch that other part. There is music in you, too, and you have something to give to me. Even so you cannot give it if you shirk. You cannot give it if you are less than a woman. How should you? You must be willing to suffer. How else can you learn. Have I not suffered—the pains of the man—the artist? I have been hungry-I have been cold-I have slept in the parks in London night after night. I have played my fiddle in the streets. I have taken my sleep in low dens side by side with men who were no menfallen beasts. I have seen my mother die in pain, and seen another take her place who sold her crucifix to buy a glass necklace. I have been cheated and mocked and scorned. My genius has been like a naked child I could not protect. Life has been grim -yet out of it all I have made music. And now I come to a place where the future has its brightness, and I bring you into my life. Well, I did not think of you much-no-it is true. Life is not easy for women—why should it be easy for you? You must suffer by some man, or you are no woman. Why not me? Would it be better to cover up hard things by pretty words? Did you mean when you married

me that you would do your duty as long as it was pleasant? So?"

He had spoken in French, and so rapidly that Hild could hardly follow him. But she understood.

"Go to bed!" he commanded her as once before. "For me—I will think."

Before she turned away he looked at her, searching out by a new light the Hild who was not his. Confused by what he found, as if he had discovered in himself something new and unreckoned with, he raised his violin to his chin. Companioned so, he voiced what was in his heart, and Hild, hearing it, knew that he too had faced desolation and vivid suffering, perhaps greater than her own. Once he came into her room and looked at her as she lay on the bed, and her closed eyelids quivered while he stood so near.

In the morning she took the money that was in her purse and went, as she had arranged, to join Cavari's party at Annanville.

CHAPTER X

URING the first few days of Hild's absence Jean worked with unexampled zeal. Then, quite suddenly, a day came when he could work no more.

He was tired, defenselessly tired, and he knew the dreadful mood with which the artist pays for his hours of inspiration. It was then he had to submit to a bombardment of hostile thoughts. When they had made an opening in the ramparts of his egoism they poured in, besetting him, taking possession of his mind and excluding everything else.

First came a regiment of adverse circumstances led

by discouragement.

Jean had not succeeded with his orchestra, and on that very evening the management had pointed out that an improvement was desirable. He loathed the popular music he had to render; he despised the devices for catching the attention of minds reduced to silliness by the strain of a hot summer; he suffered by his third-rate players, and by the badly trained, often untrue, voices of the singers. His soul was given over to his new composition which he was constructing beneath the halo of all he held sacred. The music of the allegro Hild had finished copying

just before her departure, and it had seemed partly her own. But the scherzo had not been touched. To-night he thought it never would be.

But he must—he must gain a hearing! He would no longer endure to have his genius slighted. For the moment it had flown, deserted him, leaving him so horribly alone that he laid his head between his hands and sobbed. It was late, and the rumble of traffic was half hushed and the desolation of the room complete. There lay his violin on the top of Hild's piano-he could not touch it. About him closed in the walls of his loneliness that seemed to cry for Hild. He knew now that for days he had missed her acutely. Was it that she made him comfortable? No. He raised his head at the amazing discovery. It was her presence he desired. Lately, working far into the night, he had formed a habit of going sometimes to look at her as she lay asleep. If she were there now, her white arms flung out, her head turned away, the thick warm hair lying on her shoulders, would not the space he called home fill suddenly with invisible charm? "I am a fool," he pronounced as a swift assent defeated his will to answer "No." He turned aghast upon himself, unaccustomed to the ordeal of facing enemies within.

"Hild!" He said her name, and at his will she rose before him—not the Hild of flesh and blood, but that other stirring, beckoning being who had faced him from the doorway on the night when she defied

him. Was that really Hild? An overmastering curiosity arose in him to know. Had, somehow, a false image been cast between him and her visible presence, and had he mistaken it for her, and would she never again assume that exquisite significance? When she came back to him, was once more familiarly his wife and servitor, would she be merely a woman of many graces or would she—his heart stirred to a high excitement at the thought—would she be still, unquestionably, this newly conceived Hild, whose absence was turning into an active torment? Some one must answer him—answer him at once—or he would go mad.

Restless, he went into the street and turned toward the river. Before he had walked far a man touched him on the arm. It was Arthur Rale, who explained that he had been on his way to Jean's flat. The two found a bench and sat down, looking upon the water which lay dark and blue, with here and there a ripple of yellow light over it. There was no crowd at this late hour, but a man and woman, clinging to each other, passed them. Jean heard Rale sigh. The sigh told him something and, without his will, its like arose in his breast.

"What's the use hanging on to a life like this?"

Rale made the query just audible.

Jean did not answer it.

"She was a reason," the boy breathed, staring at the water.

Jean turned on him.

"You are no man," he accused him. "Life for a man, it is at the mercy of no woman. I say it."

"All right. Wait. You'll see. When she was alive I lived to win her. Now she's dead I live to get back at the class that took her from me. There are others like me, just waiting to give their lives, like you'd blow a feather into the air, to stop 'em. Nights like this I can't wait. She's there, just there, all the time, and yet I put out my hand and there's nothing. Before, I used to believe in dying. I thought it was the end. It isn't. She's there. But I can't get her, and there's the chance that when I die I will. But first I've got to do something to pay 'em back for what I've stood, and what others like me have stood and said nothing. When you play I think I'll see her again. That's why I can talk to you."

"You are very queer. You are very foolish. A woman, she is like another woman. For a little you are curious, oh, but curious. For a little you think that it is the woman who makes such feelings in the breast, and because the feelings they are fine the woman, she must be fine as well. But at last you would always find that she was only a woman and

there are many such."

"You don't understand."

"It is you who do not understand."

There was a silence. Presently Rale asked:

"Did you ever stand beside a girl, a girl in a white dress, and watch the moonlight on her face?"

"I do not remember."

"Did you ever touch her hand and, for the first

time, feel her fingers close on yours?"

"I have not touched women's hands. I have taken them, yes. I do not know what their fingers did. It did not trouble me."

"But you have had a girl's first kiss?"

To this Jean made no answer.

"And then," said Arthur Rale, his Southern voice deepening, "did you live hours together, dreaming all your dreams side by side? Perhaps they were humble dreams enough, but if they failed, and all that was left of them was memory and longing—"

"Stop!" Jean sprang erect. "Are you an imbecile to talk to me so?" Almost running, he left

Arthur Rale alone.

Half-way home his steps slackened at the thought of the emptiness awaiting him. He remembered hungry, homeless nights in London. Now it was his soul that hungered, homeless. Up to now his work had been all he needed to appease his eternal yearning for the perfect. To-night he wanted Hild. Wanting her, his passionate curiosity to know if there was such a Hild had changed to the grotesque fear that there was not. Suppose she came home and he found her, not the Hild he had for a moment envisioned, but a Hild who was to him what the house without her was now. Suppose he looked and waited, and never found her, his Song-Hild. Suppose she became to him the submissive

drudge he had tried to make her. Suppose that was all!

As he let himself in a light shone through the hall into his eyes. He listened. The door behind him slammed. Around the corner of the living-room doorway Hild's head appeared. She had her hands full of music which she was straightening. She disappeared, waiting for him to join her, but he did not dare. A few moments ago the place had been empty—now it lived with dangers and hopes and Hild. Was his madness to be proved—the madness of his dream, or the madness of his waking? Was it Hild who waited for him beyond that door, the Hild that her name had come within a few hours to mean, or a shadow, usurping her name?

Battered as was his exterior sense by experience of the grosser sort, a freshness and sensitiveness necessary to his art remained to him an untouched force, his appreciation profound. As he hung up his hat in the hall it seemed to him he was going to meet all the wonders of life and death. For to find her as she had haunted his thoughts would be like waking in an immortal world. It would be like letting his lonely soul out into the light. Was she there?

He came into the room. Hild saw with shame that he was shabby and unkempt, but as he came nearer she forgot it, meeting his eyes.

"I came home—unexpectedly," she said. "You ought to be tidier, Jean." She referred to the littered room. "I've been looking at your work.

I'll copy it to-morrow. I had an awfully good time. Let's go over this. Shall we?"

She adjusted the scrawled music so that she could see, and handed Jean his instrument. Then she played without the diffidence that usually restrained her. They played an impromptu adaptation of all that Jean had finished of the score, meeting in the music as if released from all the crudities of the flesh. They were not two, but one, while they played. As Hild's hands fell to her lap and Jean laid down his violin quick fingers clutched them away from their union, tying them fast each to his own limitations, and they looked at each other helpless across the distance imposed. Hild bent backward, seeming to stretch. For a moment she was to Jean in an intense attractiveness the woman, his wife. He bent over her roughly, throwing his arm around her shoulders and setting his face to hers, and then as he freed her he caught the look in her eyes. It was she-Hild-his Song-Hild, and she hated and feared him. It was like the refusal of his own soul to own him. It was like being an outcast from the light. It was like being rejected and thrown to all he loathed. He could have the Hild he had marriedthe husk-but that other, he remembered now she had told him himself, was beyond and away from him, no more his than a star.

"What is the matter?" she said, pushing her chair away from him.

"I want you to play again-play these-" He

opened a book of music at random. She obeyed. When she faltered, so tired that she could not do her part, he spoke to her roughly. He kept her there until she could hold her place no longer, and when she rose to leave him he flung the music down with a violent exclamation. "Go! It is no use!" he said; and she, frightened and surprised, went.

He stood where she left him. So he had found her, the substance of his dream! Finding her, he had also lost her. He had picked to pieces the bulb,

longing too late for the flower.

He could hear her moving to and fro beyond the wall. He had watched her sometimes when she did not know that he was near, and he understood now why he had thought her beautiful at these moments. He could foretell the quick raising of an invisible shield which would follow the sound of his hand on the knob of her door. He remembered the look she had turned on him a few moments before. It barred him from her. Never—he took it as a vow—should she look at him so again.

He flung himself, face downward, on the divan and lay still. When dawn came, giving first shape, then color, to the objects in the room, he slept. Hild, at her morning tasks, found him there and did not wake him.

"He will never forgive me," she told herself. She moved about the room, making order where Jean had left confusion. She could see that the sky was the blue of morning beyond smoking chimneys that intervened.

CHAPTER XI

THE visit to Annanville had not been without its peculiar results to Hild. It was an experience quite novel, a definite step into a world independent of personal ups and downs. The people whom she met there were men and women who had made places for themselves. Many of them were still struggling for recognition, for Mme. Cavari liked to extend her hand to assist a plucky climber; some of them were resting on a degree of artistic success; still others were mere satellites of genius. The play of ideas, the freedom of expression in conversation, fascinated and enlivened Hild's mind. She was quick to catch inspiration from an illuminating phrase. She was not familiar with the books they quoted so freely, she did not understand half the allusions she heard. but she listened enthusiastically and dared to put in a word or two here and there, and she felt that her freshness and sincerity told. She played for them, too, first accompanying, then rendering a few things with a taste and restraint which happened to please especially her audience, for the most part of the reactionist school. She made a small triumph which was delicious to her out of proportion to its

importance. Every one had liked her, had listened when she spoke, had praised her music. Mme. Cavari had given her a special mark of favor in her caressing manner and the way in which she called her "Hild." It had become a habit with Cavari to turn to Hild with a "Hild knows," "Hild understands," "Isn't it so, Hild," and Hild waited for these moments.

Marcia Rale was of the party, not because any one wished for her, but Hanbury was expected and had wired Mme. Cavari to have his secretary on hand. Hild was drawn to her by an interest she could not explain, and as Marcia knew the country and they both liked to walk, they spent hours together. Marcia had had a good musical education, and played the 'cello with some skill. Through music they slipped into more intimate themes for conversation, and Marcia, in bitter phrases, told Hild her story. She did not complain; she sneered at herself, at life, even at those who had befriended her, until she ran against barriers in Hild, when she was quick to find new ways. Once she tried to sneer at Jean, watching Hild, but she did not go far with what she had to say. Her resentment at life seemed to Hild to hide something, perhaps something better. Cavari's stories of Marcia's devotion to her brother bore out this idea.

Hild was in constant demand. She was petted and praised and encouraged, and bloomed under the treatment. She felt free to talk and to laugh and

to say what occurred to her to say. For the first time in her life she heard a generous give and take of thought and impression. Into this she threw her mite, and was surprised to see how respectably it weighed.

When her first delight in the freedom of the display drew off and she began to look for enduring coin among all that glittered she found that the brightness was the best thing about much of what she had thought to treasure for use. It was then that she began to wish for Jean. He would know how to deal with the literary young man who handed about thoughts like rotten apples done up in silver paper. They would listen to Jean, and if he would play to them, how he would triumph. He would reign among them, and at the thought Hild felt her cheeks glow as if she heard crowds cheering her master.

An unlucky incident spoiled the end of her visit. This was the appearance of Simeon Pierce. She encountered him during one of her walks with Marcia. She knew that she blushed, and thought that Marcia saw her blush. She made some half-audible protest as Simeon turned to walk with them to the gates of Cavari's place, but she yielded to the entreaty in his glance, afraid of what he might say if she did not, and waited after Marcia, smiling, had gone on to the house.

"I've been waiting every day to meet you," said Simeon, looking at her.

The sun was setting behind summer clouds and there was a pink suffusion of light on Hild's face.

"Well, you oughtn't to." Hild turned her profile to him and shut the gate which was between them.

"I can't help it. I just can't. What's the use of talking? Hild, don't go. Don't." He reached out, catching her hand.

Hild stamped a foot.

"Simeon, let me be."

"Say you'll stay ten minutes."

"I can't. I'll be late for dinner. Let me go."

"Then say I can come to see you to-morrow. You can't expect me to stand this kind of thing. It's too awful. At night— It's never been like this before."

"You ought to be ashamed."

"I'm not. You belong to me. I've got to see you. I'm coming to-morrow."

"Simeon, what good will it do? Let me go."

At last, his grasp on her hand never relaxing, she said:

"Then come if you want to."

He let her go.

In the morning she made an excuse to Mme. Cavari, and left by an afternoon train. Before she left she arranged with Marcia Rale that she and Hild should sometimes meet in New York at night when Jean was at the theater.

"He'd leave you and come for you," suggested

Marcia.

"Oh yes," said Hild, not too sure of it.

The memory of her visit was something to refresh

her during the weeks that followed it. She had returned to Jean, wondering how he would treat her after her defiance of him. She found that his attitude toward her was as completely changed as possible. Once he had been coarsely affectionate, vividly impatient, or entirely oblivious of her. Once there had been many hours in the day when he was nothing in her life. Now he gave her no time to attend to the work which he demanded of her. There used to be many minutes when he was kind. Now he was never kind. He made her play for him until she ached with weariness. He sneered at her mistakes, and never praised her successes. She would rise from the piano after four hours of the hardest kind of work to get his evening meal, and before she was ready with it he would fume at her slowness. He let her go to Marcia Rale's in the evenings, but he refused to let her play in public. No one could move him in this matter. He expected Hild to sit up for him, and to play far into the night if he wished it. She was magnificently strong, but she began to grow thin and tired under his exactions.

He had destroyed the whole first part of his symphonic poem and begun it again. He was not satisfied with his work. The new music he was building was, Hild could see, finer than the other. Like him, she was a good part possessed by it. There were moments which came oftener and oftener when Hild simply did not care how he treated her so long as he let her work with him. There were other

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moments when she could have killed him; still others when she thought he would kill her. He required from her so much that, to attain the least of it, she had to exert superhuman effort. She tried to satisfy him, and appeared to tantalize him. She thought she understood that personally he did not mean to forgive her, but that artistically he would try her a little longer. That there should ever be anything like love between them seemed impossible.

She had never been able to persuade Jean to join her in her visits to Miss Rale, though he usually came for her on his way home from the theater. On one occasion, however, he came up-stairs and heard them playing Handel. Contrary to all custom, he joined them for the purpose of setting right Marcia's interpretation, which he pointed out was an insult alike to the composer and the intelligent listener. Hild watched the musicians in amusement. She was pleased when Jean took out his fiddle and signed to her to play the air once more. Marcia Rale listened.

"Well, of course," she said, when it was over, "but

you are a master, you see. I'm only me!"

It was so evidently a fact that no one of the three commented upon it. There followed a controversy on modern music. Jean and Marcia disagreed over most things, mainly their operatic ideal—Marcia looked backward, Jean looked forward. She conceived Wagnerian opera as all that music could achieve; Jean thought the oratorio a finer form, and development of it the music of the future. He

pointed out in glowing words the failure, the artistic crudity, of trying to link realistic drama to an expression of the dramatic, which should be above and beyond any mere realism. He upheld his argument ably. Clearly he got the best of the cultured Marcia. Where had he managed to pick up so much knowledge? How had he come to be fit to compete with a woman of Marcia's education? When the conversation turned on books the same superiority showed. What Jean had read he had assimilated to such a degree that it existed with him, was easily referred to, accurately remembered. Hild was fond of hearing Marcia Rale talk. She liked her bitter, one-sided philosophy without accepting it seriously. Now she heard her give vent to it while Jean listened. She wondered what he would say, or if he would say anything. She did not know what he thought about the questions Marcia Rale raised so freely. She would not have asked him herself, but she found herself curious to know.

"What does it matter?" Marcia was saying. "The world has done nothing for me; why should I do anything for it? I have been dragged through villainous depths, tortured as no human being ought to be—if the word 'ought' means anything. Very well—I owe no one anything. If I believed in a God that was omnipotent I should hate Him. Why should I not? If He were omnipotent He could have spared me. He didn't! I've never been anything but unhappy. Why? Because I happen

to have a plain face and scraggy body and a set of nerves so sensitive that I can see and hear things that others can't. If I had been born blunt and pretty and stupid I should be a happy woman to-day. I tell you the world is a mistake, and we are all mistakes in it, and I like best the music and the books that tell us so, the plainer the better. I'll grieve over it with you, and make merry in spite of it, and make up my mind to face it without leaning on others or too much whining, but I won't shout, 'All's well with the world,' when I know it's a lie, and I won't promise compensating raptures for stupid suffering when the best I hope for is peace in the grave."

"So! That is why you play Handel like a street urchin at marbles! I see. Get ready, Hild."

Hild suppressed a smile as she fastened her hat. "What is your theory of happiness?" asked Marcia.

"Happiness! Happiness! I have no theory! Tell me this, young lady: What does your happiness matter! Happiness—I will tell you what it is. See! You stick up a wooden post. So! You tell two boys to run a race to see which will reach it first. Your wooden post—it becomes the important thing. The one who wins—he is happy. His blood is hot, his head is high. But what has that to do with the wooden post? So much for happiness. Now, if you please, we will look at pain. You or I are resting by the way and in a pleasant place, with shady trees and flowers. We are sleepy and content, but we do not progress on our journey. So! The skies darken

and storm descends. There is no protection. We shiver and cower and cry out, but it does no good. We move onward. We see we were foolish to linger. Very well! Next time maybe we remember—maybe we forget. Happiness and pain—they are different sides of the same thing. It does not matter by so much which comes. It only matters that we go forward. You do not understand—oh no—I see it —because you do not know. But there will come one minute when you will know. Oh yes. Are you coming?" to Hild.

Marcia Rale laughed. "That's all very well," she said, "but you ignore the stupidity of our afflictions. Why should we be punished for ignorance more than

for sin? Tell me that."

Jean turned on her. "You make me weep! You bring me to tears. Have I not told you that pain simply does not matter? Are my words Greek? Let me ask you this: Did you ever see a woman bear a child? I have. That will tell you how much pain matters when it is passed. It is a question of time in eternity. You think only of the little minute."

"And pray what should we care for, since life is a

series of little minutes?"

"Ah, that is where the words stop. Go and study

your music. You will find it there."

Hild's quick glance flew, glowing, to her husband's face. His words drew her sympathy, leaping, to his thought.

"I don't find it," said Marcia Rale.

"You do not look for it," amended Jean.

As they walked home along the hard unlovely streets Hild thought deeply on what she had heard. Woman-like, she applied it to her personal life, and made by its light a discovery. Jean was suffering. She had long realized that he was working in a sort of agony of creation, which was ecstasy as well. Now she knew that some exaction of the spirit was claiming him. For some time she had recognized in his ill-treatment of herself-it amounted to that-the unreason of a sick man. She had come to do his will with all her heart, not because she feared him but because she pitied him. Resentment was gone, and in its place came a dread of the results of such furious toil. She did not know how long he would hold out nor to what his mad concentration would lead, and she did not know how much longer she could physically and mentally endure her life. She saw that he would never alleviate his suffering by crying out against it. She must stay by until this work was done—that was clear. Then perhaps she could go home for a time to renew her physical reserve. Spiritually she was alive and robust. From despising her husband she had come to look to him for a tonic necessary for her own progression. From what she had seen of other points of view in that week at Annanville she had come to understand that they were lax and lazy beside Jean's. He demanded of himself the highest in the thing he accepted as his life, and he demanded of her-Hild-everything.

To Jean she was still a bungler at the piano. To others she was already an adept, so different was his standard from the world's. He was poor and unknown, a mere musical breadwinner, and yet Hild knew that she was privileged in living by his side, the companion of his labors.

When they reached home Hild waited to see if she would be asked to play. Then she went to her room, but Jean recalled her. He gave her scrawled lines of music to copy, and while she worked she heard him walking to and fro behind her. Then she was forced to go to him for an explanation. He struck the sheet from her hand. When she picked it up and asked him again what she should write he told her.

She finished the copying, but even then he called her to the piano and made her play. It was nearly morning before he told her roughly that she could go. She rose, stiff and spent.

"Surely you are going to rest," she said to Jean.

"Rest?" he said.

She came to him where he had flung himself on the divan, and she put out her hand to make him look at her.

"I will do anything to help you," she said, suddenly.

He took the hand she had stretched out and clung to it, wringing and pressing it, keeping and holding it as if it were all that lived between him and destruction. She endured it, not knowing how it helped

him, but meeting his need. Once before she had seen a man suffer, but that was a selfish yielding up of manhood—this was spiritual conflict such as awed her. When he let her go and lay still with closed eyes she brought a knitted cover and spread it over him as tenderly as if he had been a sick child.

CHAPTER XII

CUMMER and early autumn passed, and the Sharp beauty of October came and went like a handsome but too clever woman in her prime. November swung aloft tapestries of gray cloud, and December came, in retrospective mood, dreaming of September.

The cold weather rescued Hild from collapse and put courage into her for a time. She went on doggedly, working for Jean, only thinking from one day to another, not even trying to hope. The few who saw her often knew her case, in spite of her simple silence. Mme. Cavari had ventured to remonstrate, and Hild had managed to listen, thanking Heaven meanwhile that she had no other friends.

Help came, however, whither she dimly guessed. Obviously, Cavari arranged the matter. Actually, Hild believed, Hanbury had something to do with it. Once a week, on Sundays, Hild was allowed to go to spend a part of the day at Mme. Cavari's, and in the afternoon the singer's friends gathered for music and sociability. At these times Hild found herself petted and made a heroine, and through them she kept herself at her task. Mr. Hanbury was nearly always at Nellie's on these occasions, and he often talked to

Hild for a few moments at a time. He never made phrases, nor talked about his soul, but Hild believed he knew what she was trying to do and liked her for it. The thought warmed and braced her. It was the only sympathy she had.

On one of these afternoons she had asked Marcia to send her brother to stay with Jean while she was away. Jean and Arthur never seemed to fail each other, though they often quarreled, and more often sat in silence. On this occasion Jean had been playing, but stopped soon after Hild had boarded her down-town car.

"You move too much," said Jean. "How can I listen to my soul if you dance your feet? You do not even dance them in time!" He laid away his fiddle and filled the bowl of his pipe.

"Hild doesn't look very well," said Rale, after

hesitation.

"Hild?" he said. "Why do you speak to me of Hild?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Because you do not. Therefore I ask why!"

"You can't expect me to blurt it out like that."

Jean nodded, and lighted his pipe with care.

"I see," he said, settling himself in a chair and putting crossed feet on the table among Hild's work. "It is that you wish to be—what you call—tactful. I will interrupt no more."

Arthur grasped his knee with nervous hands.

"Fact is, we don't think Hild is happy," he suggested.

Jean waited.

"I was wondering—did you ever hear of a man named Pierce?"

Still Jean waited, but he laid his pipe aside.

"Well"—Arthur had not an eye for Jean's stiffened shoulders, seeing that he was quiet—"well—Marcia'd kill me for telling you—she said no false sense of friendship must induce me—she was sorry she let it out, anyway—but this young Pierce met Hild while she was at Annanville, and from what Marcia gathered they made a date, too. Of course I do not know how you fellows feel. But we Southerners—Well, it wouldn't go on! That's all!"

Jean made no response. He smoked his pipe to its end, and then he began to play. At last Rale left, mystified as to the reception of his news.

Hild, in Mme. Cavari's studio, was for once not inclined to play, partly because she was dazed with weariness, partly because Simeon Pierce was in the room. He came more often than she liked, and always managed to sit where he could watch her when she played. Hanbury seemed to divine that she disliked this, and he always upheld her when she expressed a wish not to play, and stayed near her often when a tête-à-tête with Simeon was imminent. She did not care to conjecture why a stranger should stand so close to her when no one else was within hail, but she once wistfully said to him, "I'd like you to

know my husband." She never mentioned Jean to others.

Hanbury was not at Cavari's to-day, and Hild missed him. She saw that Nellie was worried.

"It's this strike!" Hild was told in an undertone. "Paul is working night and day. He's in Chicago now. It will kill him if it goes wrong."

"How can it?" asked Hild.

Nellie sighed. "It's the Extremists and their firebrands!" she explained. "As if the men weren't too hot to be reasonable already." She cast a look at Marcia Rale, who was opposite. "I hope you'll keep young Rale with you as much as you can. I suppose Jean doesn't excite him? He's full of dreadful speeches. I don't know if he means them."

Hild waited for Marcia, afraid that Simeon might join her. The two girls left together, and when Simeon's step sounded behind them Hild gave Marcia's arm a pull. "Come home with me and

have supper, Marcia," she begged.

"Can't," said Miss Rale.

Simeon fitted his step to theirs.

"Art is there," said Hild.

"He always is. Jean talks socialism to him. I hope he won't get him hung."

Hild laughed and, as Marcia stopped at the corner to turn homeward, gave another tug at her friend's arm.

"Please come."

"No, I won't. And I reckon you'll have a walk. There's a block on the line."

There certainly was. As far as could be seen one electric car succeeded another; disgusted travelers were leaving them to find their way otherwise. For Hild there was nothing but to walk.

"I'll look after Hild," said Simeon. "It isn't far,

anyhow."

"No, and you can go through the Park," said Marcia.

Hild thought she sneered.

"Say, Hild," said Simeon, when they reached the quiet of the Park-side, "I've had awfully good news to-day."

"Oh!"

"I've got a chance to go into Mr. Alford's office—a good job. It's great."

"I'm glad. You know I am, Simeon. Tell me all

about it."

"Oh, it's a chance, that's all. But, Hild, look here! There isn't any use in anything good coming to me when you're looking so awful."

"Thanks! What are you going to do about

it?"

"If I did what I'd like— Don't walk so fast. I'm not going to hurt you. Won't you go home to Beverly and visit your mother a while? Say you will."

"I'm too busy. Really, Simeon. Don't talk about it."

"I've got to. Life's no circus to me, I'll tell you that. But if I've got to lose you and see you looking

pinched and pale besides, I tell you I can't stand it, and I won't. You can just do something—go away—something, or I'll—I'll—'

It was here that Hild began to cry. For a long time she cried into her muff, but then the dreadful moment came when she had to blow her nose, and Simeon knew! He managed to steer her into a narrow path that led into privacy, such as Central Park abounds in, and put her down on a bench and let her cry on. He patted her hand and spoke words that made her cry harder than ever, and finally he sat down beside her and waited in silence, which was the most sensible thing he could have done. Finally, "It's too cold to sit here," he said. "Come on, Hild." At every step that brought them nearer to her door he found it less possible to hold his peace. He was taking her back to the man who would abuse her. It was all wrong somewhere.

Hild was busy recovering herself.

"Hild," said Simeon, slowly, "have you ever thought that there is a way out of marriage when it is not happy—a way certified by law? Did you ever think of that?"

Hild could only say "No."

"You are too young to have your life settled on a mistake of your mother's.' It's dreadful, and shouldn't be allowed. It could be managed; of course it could. Think of it, Hild. Lots of people believe that no marriage is sacred that isn't a marriage of love. Can't you see that?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I've never thought about those things."

"Think now. Think of what I've said."

"You needn't come in," said Hild, as they reached her step. "Please don't."

"I'll see you up-stairs."

"Please don't. I've forgotten my key."

Simeon rang and the click-click of the opening door followed.

"I'll see you up-stairs," said Simeon, stubbornly; and Hild, too proud to say more, let him follow her. At the floor below her own she looked up between the banister-posts to see that Jean was standing in the doorway waiting. She dreaded his seeing Simeon, and Simeon seemed to dread it for her, for he stopped as if to go back, when Jean looked over and saw them.

"Good night, Hild," said Simeon.

"Good night," said Hild, and picked up her gown to mount the remaining stairs. She bent low, for the stairs were steep, but as she reached the top she raised her head, expecting to see Jean's angry face. Instead she found a closed door.

Evidently it had swung and caught behind Jean, and he did not know. She rang the bell. There was no answer. From behind the closed door she heard the sound of the piano. She waited and rang again. Some one looked out from the opposite flat. "Ain't no use ringin' when he's at his playin.' Crazy as a lunatic." And that door, too, was slammed.

Hild knew now that Jean had shut her out. She had known it, she suddenly believed, all the time. She waited a little longer and rang again.

What was she to do? Sit on the stairs till he opened the door? She reddened at the thought. Hild, slow to anger, was angry now. She forgot that she knew Jean. She forgot everything. She only felt that the end of her endurance had come.

She turned away and slowly descended the stairs.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTERWARD, when Hild tried to remember the details of the days that followed, she did not recall feeling frightened or ill. She remembered that she had walked for a long time along the side of the Park, and that some man had spoken to her, and she had found herself near Nellie's flat. She remembered the comfort of the chair in Nellie's drawing-room, and she remembered waking to find Mr. Hanbury standing beside her. She felt he was talking to her, but to understand required such immense effort that she shook her head and went to sleep again.

After that she was put to bed, and a beneficent being in a white uniform had appeared, whose mission was to answer questions and talk to doctors, and think instead of Hild, who really could not be bothered with any of these things. It was later, when she was recovering, that Hild realized she had been ill. At the time it seemed that she was a mass of aching weariness, which only required to be left alone.

She woke up; sometimes by day, with yellow onslaught of sunshine on drawn blinds, with Miss Clarke reading or knitting on a low chair by the bed,

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where a table was laden with a clock, green bottles, a vase of fresh flowers, a thermometer, and a chart on which the nurse wrote frequently, and which Hild had no curiosity to see, though the doctor and nurse seemed to find it absorbing; sometimes she woke at night, when, if she moved, Miss Clarke would rise shadowy, with pleated hair, to give her water or turn her pillow; and the black shapes of things would loom, and the steady burning of the night light seemed somehow to tell the long dark hours better than the clock that ticked and ticked when all else lay still.

There was a wood-fire in Hild's room that burned gloriously by day, but at night its logs glowed redly, occasionally starting into transient flame. Early in the morning, dressed in her white uniform, Miss Clarke would bend over the logs, starting them to a blaze; and Hild loved the moment, for the nurse's red hair, which was abundant and fine, warmed gloriously beneath her cap, and her slim, active figure seemed a bulwark between Hild and the vague evils of a dreaded convalescence.

The convalescence, however, came sooner than any one had thought. A day arrived when Hild turned on her pillow, and with large inquiring eyes asked a question, and would be answered. The news was carried to Mme. Cavari. It was later conveyed to Simeon Pierce, and by letter to Hild's mother. On the following day there were further questions, and a determined opposition to milk

gruel. After that, with occasional setbacks, each day told in the courting of strength. Nothing in the peculiar illness had deserved the name of struggle. It was a sudden succumbing to physical weakness and a slow renewing of wasted form. The doctors did not even retire behind "nervous breakdown." They agreed in thinking that Hild, taxed nearly beyond her endurance, had ceased to endure, that her constitution had "struck," so to speak, and in so doing had saved her from worse things.

It was settled that Hild should go to Beverly as soon as traveling was possible. There was no talk of Jean. But one morning Mme. Cavari gave Hild an envelope, which she said, briefly, had been left for her early in her illness. It inclosed a flat latch-key, the one Hild had neglected to carry on the Sunday afternoon when she had returned with Simeon. There was no letter. Hild thoughtfully hung the key on her watch-chain, but she said nothing.

She saw much of Hanbury during her convalescence. He never tired her, and if she could have talked to any one it would have been to him. But she was not fit to think yet. She put away from herself problems, hopes, fears, even memories, reposing on her joy in returning health. This quietness of mind remained to her during her first weeks at Beverly. It was exquisite to wake, conscious first of the narrow shelter of her white bed, its warm covers drawn close to her face, a sensation so familiar

that it was like a curtain slipped between herself and the recent past. It was good to see the friendly apple tree outside her bedroom window move stiffly in the wind, shaking off the soft weight of newly fallen snow. It was good to hear the dripdrip from the eaves sounding delicately on her sill. Best of all, to know that her mother was near, waiting for her waking. Hild was no longer a girl kept out of all relation to life in artificial and enchanted stillness. She was a woman to whom necessity loomed large. She appreciated her mother. And to have coffee and hot bread on a tray as soon as she woke was heavenly.

More difficult at first was her meeting with friends. Miss Massam, spectacled and sharp, was her first visitor. Hild kissed the old lady in welcome and listened, smiling, to all she had to say, even to the

frank comments on her altered appearance.

"My land, if you haven't fell off! Why, you ain't of no size 't all, barrin' your eyes! They're big

'nough, goodness knows!"

"I guess you'd look pretty sick if you'd been in bed four weeks and living on gruel and dry toast!" Hild defended herself.

"Wal, mebbe. Yer mother 'n' me'll hev' to fatten you up, that's all. Train' nurses! Train' idiots!"

"Oh, but Miss Clarke was dreadfully nice," said

Hild, feeling suddenly very young.

"Nice! I guess so. It all goes to bein' nicenice rig-up, nice manners, nice pay. I guess if

every woman rigged herself up in a white cap and stiff apron and thermometer and strutted around lookin' fer all the world like a Mrs. President of the U. S. A. there'd be pretty readin' on the deathcolumns!"

"Well, I think you're mean, Miss Massam. I don't know how I should have lived without my nurse."

"Lived! I tell you what, Hild Emery, you'll live as long as the Lord lays out fer you to live, and yer train' nurse may be pretty close to the Almighty, but she won't stop yer dyin' when yer time's up. It do beat all what the young folks set out to know these days. Seems as if they wa'n't nothing you could teach them."

In spite of the bitterness raised by the question of trained nurses Miss Massam entertained Hild for an hour. A good deal was said about Miss Massam's one experience of New York life. She had been there on an excursion in her comparatively youthful days to visit a friend who had become, in the giddy ebb and flow of affairs, momentarily very prosperous. She had stayed long enough to pay in the saving of food and fuel for her ticket, and the experience was a never-failing source of interest to her.

"Yes, I did go to the theater," she admitted. "Lots of folks—God-fearin,' too—go now, but in those days you had to be pretty brave. My land, if I didn't feel wicked! I sat in them seats just shaking. I was afeard to see the curtain go up.

When it begun to raise as slow as slow"—Miss Massam dropped her sewing, and with fixed eye regarded the past—"I could 'a' screamed!"

"But you didn't! Was it as bad as you thought?"

"Hild Emery, I could 'a' hired a buggy and hitched old Kate up to it, an' seen the same any day! They was a haystack'n' a old farmhouse for all the world like Hiram Pratt's, 'n' a farmer 'n' a boy worse at whistlin' than our Mert, 'n' lots o' other folks. The only thing that I could see was out of the way was a scene in New York where there was a statue o' a bare woman set up right in the middle o' the parlor, and the man on the stage was every mite as shocked as I was—worse shocked, I should say."

"Oh, Miss Massam, weren't you a weeny bit

sorry?"

"Wal, I says to Matildy, when the play was over, says I, Matildy Sawyer, when I've got my mind all made up to ginger-ale I ain't one to be content with well-water, 'n' Matildy she looked at me queer 'n' she says to me, 'All right, Sary,' says she. 'We'll go this very night and see the 'Gay Lady.'"

"And did you?"

Slowly Miss Massam shook her gray head.

"I got a telegram when I got home to say as how father had a stroke 'n' I was wanted home."

In February Mrs. Carson brought Hild the great news of Chloe's engagement to Alec Masterman; and early in March the young lady, having done with

boarding-school, came home. To be with Chloe again was to discredit the year's experiences.

Flushed with the moment's glamour, they talked fast and long of the future, immediate and remote. Alec, won completely to the service of Chloe's importance, was the boarding-school girl's ideal of a lover. He bombarded Chloe's hours with telegrams, letters, presents, and visits. He came on from Boston for an hour's conversation with his bride-tobe. His love letters covered innumerable sheets, and favored Hild was brought to awed admiration of the poetic nature of his headings and signatures. He gave up himself, all his time, and all his money to being a lover; and, as Chloe pointed out, some such prodigality of devotion would be required of him always. Of course, in their New York life he would be absent eighteen hours out of the twenty-four making money wherewith to pursue his wife's favor, but then "Chloe, for one, could not stand a man forever around." The pair were to sail for England soon after their marriage, and come back when their money gave out, unless "papa would fork over," and on their return an allowance from both fathers was to keep them until Alec was "on his feet," which Chloe hoped would be soon, "because, you know, you really can't do everything on ten thousand a year."

Once or twice Chloe did turn her attention to Hild's affairs to state emphatically that "I don't know how on earth Hild had stood it so long," and con-

fidently to take for granted that Hild didn't mean to stand it any longer. All Chloe based her remarks upon were her own surmises, for Hild remained silent with this friend upon the details of her matrimonial venture. It was not difficult to cut it out of their intercourse, for Hild seemed to them both at most times so convincingly the girl of two summers ago.

Alec Masterman spent Easter at Beverly, and, to every one's surprise, so did Simeon Pierce. The weather was heavenly and, for April, warm, and Chloe proposed a drive to a neighboring town, where the attraction was offered of meeting a school-friend of hers to whom she wanted to exhibit Alec. Early on the Saturday of Holy Week Chloe swept in upon Hild, explaining the expedition.

"You'll come, won't you?" she asked.

"I? Oh, Chloe, you and Alec don't want me."

"Yes, we do. We thought it would be so jolly, and we'll ask Simeon, too, and it will be like old times."

"I guess I better not."

"Oh, Hild, why not? There's no harm in it. I think you're silly! I do! As if Simeon would hurt you. I'll ask your mother." Indeed, Mrs. Emery, who had heard the whole discussion, intervened with a "Do go, Hild. It will do you good." And Hild, turning away, yielded, feeling none the less that every one was interfering somewhat stupidly in her affairs.

CHAPTER XIV

THE town where Chloe's friend lived was not far from the sea. It was the upgrowth of a fashionable watering-place, turned political. As, the long drive behind them, they neared the coast the breath of salt air excited Hild. The drive had been gay and glorious in the spring air, and the four felt irresponsible and free, and no one suggested that the Hild of the moment was other than the Hild of the fair past.

"Oh, Chloe, do give up your visit and let's drive

to the beach instead," begged Hild.

"I'll tell you what!" Alec Masterman drew the horses to a standstill. "You and Simeon can go. 'Tisn't far. And you can meet us outside the Albion House at five. Go ahead."

Simeon said nothing; but Hild, careless for the moment, said "Let's!" and before further reflection could stay her they had changed the carriage for a trolley-car and were careering down the line in company with a sleepy urchin, whose bundles slipped one by one to the floor as the car jerked its way onward.

As Alec had said, it was not far, and the long rocky coast with its rare intervals of beach was quickly reached. There was no one about, for east winds

still swept the coast, and Simeon had to find a wellsheltered spot before they could rest and watch the waves. He had made himself disarmingly and impersonally agreeable during the drive, and now Hild became suddenly conscious that his presence was acceptable to her. It was this that startled her to a sense that she had been foolish to come at all on the excursion, and more foolish to embark upon such an adventure as a tête-à-tête with Simeon. She was, however, tucked comfortably into the folds of a golf cape, her shoulder against a sun-baked rock, and the sea, beyond the breaking white near her, was blue under a lazy sky, with thin clouds lying across its distant line. Hild loved the sea. It said things her soul ached to say and could not. It was like a great poem in which one did not need to mark passages, because every message was equally sympathetic. It was like a beloved shoulder on which one could bury one's eyes and shut out the world.

"Hild," said Simeon, not looking at her, "I have something to tell you, and I'm awfully glad you've given me this chance. It's hard to say, and I hope you won't think I'm meddling—I'd hate you to think that—only your friends in New York want me to tell you that it would be quite easy for you to get a divorce at any time. Your—Mr. Kontze has been spoken to, and he won't oppose it if you think best to start action. Under the law of desertion and non-support it is only a matter of time—"

"But he hasn't deserted me, and he would support me-"

"But you can easily prove everything necessary, and he won't defend the suit."

"But-"

"Mme. Cavari saw him-"

"Oh! Didn't Jean say anything else?"

"I believe Mme. Cavari asked if he wished to write to you, and he said he had sent you a message already and you knew all he had to say."

"A message?"

"I don't know what he meant."

Silence, while Hild glanced down and saw the

latch-key hanging from her chain.

"Hild, I won't touch you and I won't look at you, but I've got to tell you. It's all been wrong—wrong. If you had married me—ah, Hild, my whole life would have been yours—all of it. I'd have worked for you, and worked hard to give you everything. Your happiness—why, it's my dream by night and my hope by day to make you happy. I would make you happy, too. Think of it, Hild—only think. I'd surround you with love. I'd woo you and win you. Darling—darling!" He broke his word, turning on her his eyes, bright as a cat's. "Hild!" he said, deeply; and the sea breaking noisily below seemed to seize the word and carry it it away in receding foam.

With that word the peace of Hild's return to health came to an end. Her mother for weeks had been

speaking small words with intention, her friends had been hinting what they dared of feelings she had divined, she herself had been yielding little by little the purity of her own purpose, and now Simeon, in a breath, presented to her the end to which this sequence led. Her eyes had been closed. She had felt the jarring of the vehicle beneath her, but the ease of her position had kept her from caring where she was carried. Now it was as if she had suddenly roused herself to see the parting of the ways before her, with a sign-post marking the way. Should she close her eyes again?

If Jean had practically coincided with the others who urged her to leave him, then, indeed, why not? But had he? In her heart she knew what his thought had been in sending her the key. When she was ready to use it, then he was ready for her to return to him, not on the terms her friends would have considered possible, but on his own. A year ago Simeon had urged her not to marry Jean. Now he urged her to leave him. Then, led by duty and the glamour of a high aspiration, but perhaps most of all by fear, she had resisted him. Now the impulse to vield was stronger-she knew it. Simeon was young, and she was young, and she knew so much more than a year ago, and with a surging of fear she realized that if she divorced Jean she would marry Simeon. It was inevitable. And he would spoil her and love her, and she and Chloe would make youthful years gay with theaters and pretty clothes

—and—and—her union with Jean would seem like a dreadful dream. Hild covered her eyes. But, ah, what a vivid dream! And suppose some time she saw Jean, heard him play, or suppose she learned that he had died. Memories of him and her life with him blotted out the blue sea and made her cry: "Simeon, you've spoiled it all. I was happy, and you've spoiled it."

"Well, Hild, I had to. Everything's spoiled for

me. Anyway, you might be sorry."

"So I am; only what's the use in talking?"

"Because you can make it all right."

"Yes. It sounds easy. But you don't know."

"I know you've been unhappy, and I could make you happy. That's what I know. Look at Alec and Chloe. Hild, it might be us. We've more than they have to build on. He? He's loved Chloe six months. I've loved you, through everything, two years. If I got you now—if I did! It's all I want—that and work, which means money to give you."

"Is that all work means to you?" she asked,

curiously. "Honestly?"

"Oh, Hild, Hild!" he vowed.

"And do you really think we'd be happy, and do

you think that's the most important thing?"

"Yes, I do. Happy in the right way. Why, Hild, it's a sin for you not to be happy. You're made for it."

"If you saw me happy with somebody else?"

"I'd die. But I wouldn't say a word to you to

spoil it. What I won't stand is to see you wretched with somebody else, and everybody feels as I do. Hild, won't you say one word to give us leave to make you free? Ask your mother. Senator Carson's talked to her about it. And, Hild, we'd have to wait, but some day I'd come and get you, and then—no more worry, no more loneliness, love. Oh, I can promise you everything your heart can wish. Wait! I'll wait so patiently, Hild—say I may wait for you. It's all I want or ask, Hild!"

Two Hilds heard the words—a Hild young and impressionable, one who rebelled fiercely against the thought of those months of troubled marriage, and who, ravished by the business of gay nuptials between Chloe and Alec, yearned for like things for herself, and for one person to throne her in his life, a queen. The other, more silent, more stern, and, some overjudge of her soul declared, more permanent, quelled the first and struck fear to her heart. As she struggled, her mood chaotic, Simeon stepped nearer and would have taken her hand had she not shrunk back against the rock, the thought of Jean striking a clear shaft of white light through her mind. Had she not married him? Had she not lived by his side for months? Had he not shared with her his all? Had he not even accepted her into that inner sanctuary, where he created great music? Suffer! Simeon talked of suffering. Jean had not talked of it, yet had she not seen him in agony of soul too deep and rending for any words? There was much in

him she did not understand, much she could never understand, but all she could charge him with respecting herself she did understand and could, after all, forgive. A child's quick fury come and gone in a flash, and a rooted belief that as his wife she was his-the servant of his life. He needed her, she knew it remorsefully, and she was playing here with the idea of marrying some one else, of having several maids and pretty clothes and a lover. She meant it to be legal-ah, yes. But would it be any better for that? One married-yes, she saw the awfulness of it now. One undertook the responsibility of a man's future. Could a time ever come when a woman might say, "Now he no longer needs me; I can do nothing for him, and never shall be able to again. Now I can lay this burden down"? Meantime Jean, she knew, worked on his opera and ate boiled eggs and cold potatoes. And there dangled the latch-key, pathetic, at her waist. She had known all the time what it meant, and yet she had let it go and had not even written.

"Oh, I am horrid!" she said to Simeon, covering

her face.

"Hild, don't!"

"Well, I do! I am horrid. He's done nothing. He's a genius, and sometimes he goes mad over some tiny thing. He needs some one to look after him. And besides, Simeon"—she straightened herself and looked far out to sea, hating to cut off her sight of closer and pleasanter things, but not daring

to hesitate—"besides, I don't think—no, I don't think that there's anything on earth so beautiful as—" She was thinking of the hours she had spent listening to the language beyonds words, the music Jean evoked for her; but, looking at Simeon, she saw he did not understand, and finished, awkwardly, "When we play together, I mean."

"And that makes up for the rest?"

"Not exactly. To one side of me that doesn't matter; to the other side it's all that matters. Somehow I think the last is the one that counts."

"But, Hild, when he holds you, then don't you think of life with love? Don't you think of me?"

"No, no!" She had grown white, and then suddenly she said: "But if you kissed me now—or to-night—or any time—I should think of Jean playing something sad and wild, and—oh, I'm horrid. I'm miserable. I've got to go back."

"Hild, you'll break my heart."

"No—besides, that's not my business. I'm well now—well and strong. I'll go home."

"Home?"

"Yes. Home."

They walked together over the uneven beach and the wind blew Hild's veil across her cheek, shutting out Simeon's eves.

CHAPTER XV

THE drive home was black and silent and, for Hild, dreadful. Simeon drove; and Alec and Chloe, on the back seat, whispered and warmed beneath the cloak of darkness. Moment after moment brought new doubts and fears to Hild, like inky spots on a bright background.

A hope, cherished, but unrecognized, now stood before a conscience that judged it and would not be duped. It was to instinct, not reason, that this

judge went for wisdom.

She had no means of knowing that Jean wanted her back. He had sent her no word to say so, and the key was all she had to reassure her. It seemed rash, it seemed even ridiculous, to creep back to his side, like a cat that has been fed and wants to be fed again. Suppose he turned her away. Her flesh burned at the thought.

Things came to her, bits of knowledge, isolated, but which flew like filings to a magnet, piecing out her decision. She saw what hesitation would mean. Every word spoken to her, every happy moment of her present existence, seemed to tempt her a step farther from Jean. During the drive

Simeon said once:

"I'm awfully sorry. Say, Hild, I oughtn't to have said so much. Promise me you'll forget. Don't go back yet. I won't bother you. Honest! I'm going away. I'll go to-morrow if you'd rather. Don't make me think I've sent you back before

you're strong."

"I'm strong enough," Hild had answered. She knew his thought. He believed that his attack had been premature. He hoped that time would accomplish what words could not. She acknowledged him justified. If he had not spoken she would not so soon have realized his drift. If she had waited to realize it later, would her revulsion from it have been complete? Was it complete now?

She examined herself. She put aside as well as she could any but her own convictions. Had she through her own fault come to this dangerous moment? She was not sure. But she felt the danger, knew that it was decisive, and urged herself to combat it. Facing a future, however remote, when the thought of Jean would be peculiar torment, she was nerved to action. She knew, so she thought, the worst of life with Jean. The worst of a life unfaithful to him she feared as the unknown is feared.

Stinging and enduring came another thought. Life with Jean was valuable. She might not be equal to it, but, though it might be weak to fail, it was weaker not to aim at success. To stand by him and minister to him was to share with him an endeavor so splendid as to raise the meanest spirit.

She had felt this, known it, never for a moment forgotten it from the night when she returned from Annanville to the day of their separation. It had held her to her place, given her courage, and on it her mind had rested. To nothing else could she turn with conviction. She could offer half a Hild to ease and happiness. Hild, whole and eager, belonged to Jean.

When the party left her at her gate she ran into the house and sprang upon her mother, with flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes, as if she were full of good news.

"I thought it would do you good, Hild," said Mrs. Emery, satisfied. She stood by while Hild ate a lunch of hot bread and cereals and drank coffee. When the girl had finished, Mrs. Emery put the things on a tray, and the two made the room orderly. Then they went together into the sitting-room.

"You do look well!" said Mrs. Emery.

"Mama," said Hild, "are you sorry you left my father?"

"Hild, how can you!"

"Well, I've often wondered. I think a woman most always is. Mama—I'm going back."

Mrs. Emery dropped the knitting she had picked

up.

"I've got to," said Hild, not thinking of her mother.

"Hild, you'll break my heart."

It all came out then, and Hild listened and

burned. Senator Carson had had Jean approached in the matter of a divorce. Jean could raise no objection. It would all be most simple, and the idea had been to say nothing to Hild until affairs were in train. All Hild need do was to set her hand to paper, say a few words, and she was free. To return to Jean, even if she did not remain with him, would be fatal to this scheme and make escape much more difficult. Hild was young and did not know what was best. Senator Carson, Mrs. Carson, all Hild's friends knew and approved the plan. She must abide by their decision. It was impossible for her to submit herself to insult and ill treatment. Did Hild wish to kill her mother? Did she wish to grovel before a man who might, quite probably, repeat a former performance and slam his door in her face? Was this pride? Was it even decency?

Hild, cooling, refused to say what it was, but re-

peated her decision.

Very well. Did Hild know that Jean had been seen with most disreputable characters? Did she know that he had been found, among others, in a den of anarchists, and might have been arrested as easily as not? Did she know that he was on very intimate terms with a young woman named Rale? Did she care to have her mother go into her own story of disillusion and despair?

When tears quenched eloquence Hild spoke: "Mama, do you want to see me wretched?" "Hild!" This was managed between sobs.

"Then, if you don't, leave me alone. I could be wretched. I could die of it. I could—do something awful. I could. Leave me alone."

"Hild, you were wretched with Jean."

"At first I was." Hild looked at her mother and said what was in her mind. "That was not his fault."

"You will be again. You'll never be happy."

"Maybe not. There's no use talking, though. I'm going back."

"Why, Hild, why?"

"Because I'm afraid."

"Afraid? Of what?"

Hild did not know.

"I think-of awful moments."

"Remorse for a man who has shut his door in your face?"

"Maybe it's that."

"Hild, you are crazy."

To this Hild made no answer. For the first time she saw that a letter lay on a table near the door. Usually she looked for letters. To-night she had been too preoccupied. She tore open the envelope and read:

DEAR HILD,—Can you give me your husband's address? Mr. Hanbury wants to find him, and we can't get any trace of him. He's left Eighty-third Street. I hear from the woman who had the flat below that he had been out of work for a long time before he left. I have waited, thinking Art might look in on me, but he seems to have

vanished, too. I haven't seen him for two weeks. He is sure to know where Jean is. Everybody's down on Jean, and Mme. Cavari refused to see him when he called about the "Gondola." You know she was going to introduce him to Galby. So I reckon he's down on his luck. I hear you're going to stay where you're well off. That's right. Jean is going from bad to worse, and there's no reason for you to go, too. If you know where he is, be sure to write.

Yours,

MARCIA.

Reading the letter, and standing afterward reading it again on the blank space of the wall, Hild's head was full of hurrying thoughts that gave one another no mercy, but pushed and shoved in dreadful disorder. She waited, not understanding what her mother was saying. At last moral forces, like policemen in a crowd, stilled the riot, and, one by one, with time to look them in the face, she saw the new facts which Marcia's letter had added to the situation.

Jean, alone, out of work, forsaken by his friends on her account! She must find him, must rescue him. Suppose, indeed, he should bend to fate. He was misunderstood, ill treated, and alone, and he was worth a hundred lives like Hild's. She knew this, as others did not, and the responsibility was, therefore, hers. If she could do nothing for Jean, still she was bound to act.

"Mother dear," she said, "I'll have to go tomorrow."

She did not even know that Mrs. Emery, protesting, followed her to her room. She packed her trunk with steady hands, and when at last her mother left her she undressed and went to a bed on which she slept quietly till morning.

CHAPTER XVI

URING the days of Hild's illness Jean had gone to the Rales for news of her. Marcia knew why he came, and gave out scraps of information, not too generously. When Hild had recovered and gone to Beverly Jean's visits to Marcia ceased.

He had counted on placing his "Gondola" symphony with Galby and getting a hearing. But Mme. Cavari had refused to see him. Everett was away, and he had been out of regular work for many weeks. The Rales had stood by him when he was in a frame of mind to lose every friend. He offended those whom he knew. No one would give him anything to do. "He either drinks or else he's luny," briefly objected one man, when Marcia Rale spoke of Jean's gifts.

Then Jean pulled up. He had given his passion for Hild that which was not his own to give. She was his wife. If she came back to take her place in his life he would receive her with a joy he forbade himself to imagine. If she did not come back he could live without her. He had sent her a message in the key. She would understand. If she were ready to come back on his terms she would come in time. He would not seek her; he would not even

have her except on his conditions. Life might be sinister, and he might suffer, but he was a privileged messenger pressing through hostile forces to a goal.

One evening in March, before he had left his flat, Marcia came to see him. He let her in, and she sat down in Hild's chair, which was covered with dust. She looked about her on Hild's absence made visible. Then she said:

"Isn't Hild coming back?"

Jean fingered his pipe.

"How can I tell?" he tossed her. "Women—they do right—they do wrong. To go further, it is to be in a labyrinth, is it not?—such a foolish labyrinth. Who would waste time so? Hild—I think she is a good woman. I think she will come back." He put his empty pipe between his lips.

"Why don't you ever come to see us any more?" Marcia asked, looking at the muddy tip of her boot.

"Arthur—he comes to see me. That is no trouble."

Marcia looked up.

"You used to come."

"That is true." Jean's glance was puzzled. "I used to, but I do not. These are facts. I cannot explain them. Why should I?"

"It's only that-I'd like you to come."

"So. It requires a very long time to say what it is you want."

Marcia drew back, and advanced along another line.

"What are you doing?" she asked. Jean shrugged. "Can you not see?"

"Have you tried to get work?"

"Have I tried! That—it is what you call a joke. Witness!" He extended a shattered boot.

"What has become of Everett?"

"Mr. Everett—he is in England. He is very busy. Mme. Cavari—she does not like me any more. It is because she likes Hild. I see that, but I do not understand it. I have allowed myself to wonder. The minds of people are mysterious. Yes, I have discovered it. Mme. Cavari—she likes me because I can fiddle, not because I am a good husband to my wife. No! Then I marry Hild, and she thinks Hild is pretty and nice. Is that a reason for liking me no longer? Can I not still fiddle? I do not understand. But it is so. She will not see me. Mr. Galby, he will not read my score."

Marcia, irrelevant, picked up the empty pipe.

"Have you no tobacco?"

Jean shrugged.

Marcia rose and walked to the window, where reflections, lights, and blackness lay flat before her eyes. When she came back she was bare of the shield which she wore in a ravening world. Jean, who had an eye for such things, saw the discarding of defense.

"Shall I share with you?" she asked; and then, in a lower voice, she added, "May I?"

"Why?"

She looked at her gloves, which were too large and

needed darning.

"I'd like it. We're both unlucky. Hild has given you up. You'll soon be on your feet again, and forget all about me. I'd expect that. Don't think I'd look for gratitude. I know better."

Jean remaining silent, she went on, pleading

awkwardly.

"I'd like to have you for a friend for a while. And I'd like to think I'd stepped in and helped when others didn't—when Hild didn't. It would be a sort of getting ahead of the world that had often enough gotten ahead of me. You ought to understand!"

"Understand? Yes, I understand what you say. It is what you mean I do not understand. You and

I could not be friends. I do not like you."

"Not at all. On no terms?"

"No. You are like this." He held his two hands an inch apart. "Small—is it? You have the ideas of a peddler. You buy life with a bad coin and expect all in exchange! Some day I should hear you play Beethoven, and then I should go mad."

Marcia watched him.

"If I leave out the friendship will you take my help?"

"No. If you were a man-yes."

"But why?"

"It is best to have no dealings with women. I have found it so. You think it is over, you have forgotten, and then one day—zip—whoof—there is

trouble—oh, but trouble! 'Have you forgotten this? Do you remember that?' Ah, but foolishness! Of course you have forgotten, of course you do not remember. Why should you? You have other thoughts, other business. Episodes—they come, they go. Shall you carry them like a knapsack growing ever heavier through life? For me, I do not understand women, and will not deal with them. No! You are thirsty. You see a full bottle—it seems pleasant. You drink—so. It may be wine, but it may be poison. No, I am no chemist, and I do not understand women. I will not drink."

"I see. Then why marry a woman?"

"Marry? A man must have one woman. That is unlucky—but it is so. They are pleasant to the eye—and they are made to be useful. You are intelligent, you can see that."

"Suppose Hild never came back?"
"Suppose? Why should I suppose?"

"Would some one replace her?"

"Perhaps—perhaps not. I cannot be troubled to inquire."

"She is like any other woman."

"No-Hild-she is not like you."

"But there are others to suit you as well?"

Jean glanced away from Marcia. He did not answer. He was thinking of Hild. He did not know if other women held for other men the imperishable beauty which Hild represented to him. It was hard to believe. It was something apart from the material,

but touching it at every point and informing it as the hidden thought informs a series of written words. It even impregnated her surroundings, this room which she had tended, where they had lived. It was free and pervading, painfully sweetening life for him even in these dreary days. It was scarcely to be credited, but it was true. And now Marcia asked him if Hild could be replaced by another, when the very thought of a woman moving about in these rooms sickened him, when the sight of Marcia occupying Hild's chair was like a beloved melody played on a badly tuned instrument.

"Look here, Jean," Marcia said, taking courage in his silence, "you could come and live with Arthur and me, and I'd look after you as I do him. I'm used to it, and I'd like it. I wouldn't ask anything

in exchange, not one thing. I mean it."

"You would not ask me to make love to you—no?" asked Jean. "That is what you think. Maybe you would—maybe you wouldn't. I do not know. I do not intend to discover."

"Well, and if I did!" Marcia let slip from her grasp the reins that held a hundred careering steeds of impulse. They swept her along, to disaster if chance so decreed.

"Precisely!" said Jean. "If you did! You have said it!"

"If I did, having made your comfort, having proved that I could do what pretty Hild can't, what would you say to me? It seems possible to me,

It seems not too much to hope even from a life that's treated me like this one. I fell in love with you, and I've suffered for it. You thought no more of me than your old coat that you don't need any more. But I had the pain of hoping. Oh yes, I had that. You're a brute to women, you know, and always would be, and you'd make any woman wretched. But I'd have a minute or two, perhaps, to understand happiness in. It can't be too much to ask. It can't! It can't!" She stamped her foot, and the yellow light in her eyes caught Jean's glance.

"So!" said Jean. "It is well I know. It is your idea to help me to a cheese that the trap may spring on my neck, like an unfortunate mouse I once observed. I felt sympathy for that mouse. I think, if it should have happened that I had been caught, yes, I think the mouse would have felt sympathy

for me!"

"I wish you were starving—or dead!" said Marcia.

"It is not agreeable to starve," said Jean, "but I think it is very simple to be dead. Many people are. They seem not to mind it. They do not come back. I notice that."

Marcia reached to gather in runaway emotions.

"I'd have helped you," she said, "and I'd have been a fool for my pains. They say women on lonely farms go mad inside of a few years. Well, I'm as lonely as that, and I reckon I'm going mad. One thing I can tell you—leave Art alone, You're

egging him on. I know it. If he comes to trouble through you—if he does!"

"It is only mere silliness you talk," Jean mur-

mured, resigned.

"It's a warning, that's what it is," said Marcia. "Tell him not to come here any more."

"He comes to listen to my music."

"Yes, and then he's worked up to a passion, and you and he go out to your low clubs, and there are speeches and talk, and he can't sleep for hating lucky men who make money out of other people's misery. Wouldn't you or I do it if we could? I tell you, leave Art alone."

She went with no more good-by than this, and the neglected little room, where Jean was nearest Hild, seemed to shake off her presence as a child will rub

away a kiss.

It was late the same night that Arthur Rale found Jean lying face downward on his divan, his fiddle under his hand, the bow dropped to the floor. Marcia had left the door ajar, and Rale had come to Jean's side unnoticed. The young man did not speak till Jean felt his presence and looked up. Then he said:

"It shows what sort of a world it is—the treatment it gives a man like you."

Jean sat up, disordered and dulled by the hour he

had spent with his thoughts.

"I cannot make music to-night," he said. "I cannot even give you supper. You had better go away."

"I know a place," said Rale, slowly, "where you could anyway get some supper by playing a tune or two. I often go. If you amuse the people the man who owns the place will give you something to eat, and sometimes the crowd is generous. They're a rough lot, if you don't mind that—"

Jean rose.

"I am hungry. I will go, I believe"—he considered—"yes, I would play to hogs for their husks. I would play for a loaf of bread at a woman's party. So have I descended. I do not understand why music is given to man, who is a stomach."

CHAPTER XVII

THE country was in a ferment of indignation, and, although no one was very clear as to the trouble, it was evident to every one that trouble was there. People quoted, more or less accurately, the latest editorial they had read, and contradicted one another with the authority of conviction. Meetings of working-men were ruddy affairs, and ladies shivered at the prospect of civil war and starvation.

Hanbury was here, there, and everywhere, the desired of reporters; a name to many and a reality to the rest. Nellie Cavari rarely saw him, and when she did it was to sing to him, feed him, chatter to him of nothing at all, never to talk to him of the things he never for a moment forgot. There was, however, a night on which he himself referred to the matter on which his soul was bent.

The two were alone late one night after the play, and Cavari had been at the piano singing softly songs she knew he loved when he spoke abruptly:

"Where is Jean Kontze?"

Cavari raised startled eyes.

"I don't know. Why?"

"Because I need him." Hanbury got to his feet,

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as he always did when he was moved by strong thought.

"You need-" Cavari paused in time.

"I need him. I've come on a thing that is like a gift out of the eternal. A boy I've known and loved has died and left to me a manuscript of truth such as I've tried to express and failed. It's wonderful. It will work wonders. Now is the time for wonders. Wonders may save us. Nothing else will. I want the thing set to music. I've been thinking of it for days, but only to-night I thought of Kontze. He is the person to do it. Where is he?"

Mme. Cavari bent her brow in trouble.

"I'm afraid no one knows," she said. "He has left his flat, Marcia told me. We were all annoyed with him, you know."

Hanbury looked at her. "You were going to get him a chance to play for Galby," he reminded her.

"Yes, but-"

"You had promised him."

"I'm afraid I did wrong. I refused to see him," admitted Cavari, thoughtfully.

"Because of Hild?" asked Hanbury.

"Why, yes," said Nellie. "You know how he used her."

"I know he is a man who has had much to bear." Seeing that he was tired and disappointed, Cavari said no more, but she made careful inquiries from Marcia and every one who would be likely to know, hoping to locate Jean. Already she had begun to

repent of her hastiness in so completely refusing her assistance to him when, after all, she had promised it. She tried to find him, increasingly eager to succeed as she found the task more difficult than she had for a moment anticipated. That Hanbury was set upon his scheme of the opera she could see, for he constantly asked her for any news of her quest. It was he who finally suggested writing to Hild, and it was at his request that Marcia did so.

The answer to this communication was not such as any one had anticipated. Hild appeared at Cavari's door on a spring evening and asked simply to be taken in. Hanbury was present at the interview between the friends and saw Hild cast herself upon Nellie's kindness, leaping miraculously a disapproval which stood visibly in the way of sympathy. Conversation came to nothing but kisses, and the pleading of Hild's eyes had their way, and Hild was welcomed, comforted, and put to bed.

Success with Cavari was followed by a weary series of failures in everything else. Hild had hoped that some one in the house where she had lived with Jean would certainly be able to tell her where he had gone, or, failing that, that Arthur Rale would turn up to help her. Neither hope proved justified. She had also been confident of finding work, but one piece of bad luck succeeded another, and she was still idle, fed by her friends, when three weeks had passed in search for Jean. Her mother wrote indignant letters, not without a trace of satisfaction that the worst of

her predictions had been fulfilled. Marcia Rale did not hesitate to sneer at Hild's plight. Even Mme. Cavari, though full of kindness, let fall words that, had they dropped into the cup of Hild's determination, would have soon diluted it to a feeble mixture. For some reason, however, Hild seemed out of reach of influence. It was her own pride that pulled her different ways, and it was fear of herself that closed gates on the path behind her as she progressed. A few words with Hanbury had a message for her, while other words were only half heard and not at all remembered. She happened to find him alone one day in Cavari's sitting-room, and sat down beside him, not according to her wont, feeling glad that he was there. He asked her, after a pause, if she had any news of Jean, and when she shook her head he leaned toward her with eves on her that gathered her sharply to him and said, "Don't give up."

"I can't," Hild answered, as if under torture she

were asked to tell what she did not know.

"That's right," he told her. "You've got something to follow. Do you believe me when I say that if you follow bravely you'll get all there is to get of earth and your share of heaven?"

"I don't know about that," said Hild.

"We're comrades," said Hanbury; and, though Hild did not know what he meant, his words stayed by her as long as she lived.

On that same evening she went to see if Marcia had heard anything of her brother, and came upon the

two together. At sight of Arthur Rale Hild made a backward step and stood looking at him. Marcia waited, smiling, and it was a long time to Hild before the answer came to her slow question. "No, I don't know where he is. You and Marcia seem to think I know everything about Jean. Why should I?"

"It isn't a bit of use, you see," said Marcia, "and we're convinced that you're a wife who deserves a whole page of history, so why not go home and

marry your Simeon?"

Hild glanced from Rale to his sister. Something new and mystifying seemed to be facing her as Marcia cast a word over her shoulder. The further questions she wished to ask were replaced in orderly fashion in her mind, unspoken. She waited a little, and then made ready to go. In the street she walked slowly, half expecting the sequel to her visit, which actually occurred. Arthur Rale joined her before she had gone far on her way, and said at once:

"Why do you want to see Jean?"

She waited to select words.

"Why, you ought to know," she ventured at last.

"Well, I'm not going to see him bullied. Do you think he wants you?"

"I promise to go away if he doesn't," said Hild.

"I suppose you think he's abused you?"

Hild looked up. "I think I was a fool ever to go away. Why, there isn't any one like Jean!" she said:

"Well, look here. If you're really bound to find

him you can go and look for him, and I'll tell you where to look. I won't promise that he'll be there, but he may. It isn't a very polite place, either, but if you want him enough to do him any good you'll have to put up with worse things."

He gave her directions and left her, and she went back to Cavari's flat in a mood that was new to her. She was not sure, on considering the matter, that it was not she herself who was new. She was not afraid. She was carried high and safe on the shoulders of her purpose.

To find Jean as Rale directed she had to go late at night to a place in the East Side called Percer's. It was a sort of eating-house and music-hall combined, and its patrons were rough creatures, with here and there, perhaps, an adventurous spirit from a different social plane. Here, Arthur had told her, Jean could always get supper free and something besides, and if she went there for several nights she was sooner or later sure to see him.

She went back to her room and spent half an hour putting her things in order and dressing herself in her plainest and neatest way. Then, afraid that Cavari would come back and ask her errand, she wrote a note to her friend, and was just placing it on her desk when Hanbury came into the room. An impulse prompted her to hand him the letter and explain to him what she intended to do. "And you won't let her think I am silly, will you?" she pleaded, with earnest eyes.

"I'll come with you," said Hanbury.

"Oh, you mustn't," cried Hild. "What would Nellie say to me. You look so dreadfully tired. Please don't."

"Nonsense. It is my business, child. Come on." She did not dare protest further, but went with him, giving up the directing of the affair to him. They made their way by street-car to Fourth Avenue, and then they walked into such places as Hild had never before seen. There was gaudy motion about them everywhere, and through it hungry faces peered like reality defying rhetoric. Hild saw the truth of the hunger, the sham which made the sense of gaiety. The women, with special finery, tried to disguise detailed shabbiness, and laughed with lips that opened on filthy words. As she walked farther, now holding Hanbury's arm, the crowd was recruited by the outpouring of the music-hall audiences, and rough sleeves scraped her shoulder and smells and rude movement entered into her senses like drugs. Hanbury led her on, sometimes glancing down to see that she was all right, and at last he said in her ear, "Here we are," and they turned in together at a gay doorway, over which the name of the place vaunted itself in letters of light.

The interior was heavy with smoke; it murmured and trembled by turns with a volume of sound. No one seemed to be silent, no one sat still. Minute by minute tables were deserted and refilled. They had to wait while Hanbury found a table for them.

Hild wondered what she should have done if she had chanced to have come alone. She did not think she would have been afraid.

"Listen," said Hanbury. "Whether or not you find Jean, will you promise to keep nothing from me? Will you let me know where you are and how you get on?"

"Why, yes; you are so kind. I will do anything you say. I think it's funny that you should have been the only one to give me any help. I don't understand it a bit. Really I don't. But some way you've understood all through, and I think it must be because you are so awfully good."

There was a small stage at one end of the room, and a girl was singing there now. No one was listening to her, however, and Hild felt desperately sorry for her. There was so much effort in the painted face and elaborate gestures, and so little response of the sort for which she was working. When she finished her song she made her way about the room with her tambourine, smiling energetically and without much success. Her place on the stage was taken by a couple who danced a cake-walk to the accompaniment of laughter and shouts.

It was twelve o'clock when a stir spread across the room. Heads turned, skirts rustled, chairs were shifted, voices rose. Between the tables a man made his way toward the stage. Hild knew before she saw him that it was Jean. She had seen him greeted before by people who waited to hear him play. A

waiter near them murmured to Hanbury: "Lots of them come just to hear him. He can play your last dollar out of your inside pocket, he can."

In the hush that succeeded the clamor of welcome Hild saw her husband's figure. His coat hung in accustomed shabby folds, his hair was wild, his eager face white. As he sent a slow glance around the room she drew back, dreading to be seen. She looked again, watching with a thrill the familiar gestures with which he raised and adjusted his fiddle. Then, forgetting her purpose, her companion, everything but the sudden releasing of her soul to the ranging of its heavens, she leaned her chin on her hands and listened.

He knew his hearers, this Jean, knew them by sympathy of a piercing kind which would have made it impossible for him to have failed them. He gave them at first airs from the Italian operas, as if feeling for their interest. He caught and gave out again all the sentiment and sweetness in them, all the gaiety and human feeling. When he stopped, a hundred voices were raised in protest, and in an expectant stillness he began to improvise. He told them stories which they could understand, he gave to them the melancholy and the sudden high spirits of young hearts, he led them through hopes and fears to transient joy, and then to loss and disillusion. He flung off depression to embark upon gaiety, wilder and swifter than anything they could have conceived. He sent to them a stern call to duty, and

then followed a lingering over daily work and homely pleasures, a woman's voice sounding through the laughter of children; and while these were growing fainter and sweeter, like the merging of reality in retrospect, there dawned the holiness of waning life, and suddenly, dispersing peace, rebellion at death, which wears itself out in weariness and calm, and the sound of the world surging on, sweeping away the individual note, and ceasing at last on a splendid chord of triumph, God's word that all is well.

In the midst of applause a young man passed Jean's hat, and Hild saw that coppers and silver pieces fell briskly into it. Jean packed his fiddle

and prepared to leave.

"Thank you," said Hild. "I'll remember to let you hear. Good night." She got up and followed Jean out of the doorway into the lighted street.

CHAPTER XVIII

HILD followed her husband through the lighted streets into a narrow dark alley. She did not like to speak to him here. She wanted to come upon him alone, in a room where they could talk.

She had not far to go. She kept close to his heels and turned after him into a courtyard, followed him up a flight of insecure steps, hardly noticing the odors that met her, through a low doorway, and up narrow stairs to the top of the dark house. She was in time to hear him close a door, and had no difficulty in telling which one it was of the two on either side of the passage, for from the other side came mingled sounds of a querulous voice, like a sick woman's, and another voice monotonously counting "forty—forty-one—forty-two (Can't you be quiet!)—forty-three—forty-four—forty-five" on and on. Hild waited until she saw under Jean's door a narrow thread of light. Then she knocked and entered.

Jean was standing beside the table on which he had just set a lighted oil-lamp. The match in his hand still burned. Hild could see all the poverty and desolation of the room before her. In one corner an unmade bed supported huddled clothing of all descriptions, topped by one of her own Persian

rugs. Soiled linen lay at her feet. There were two chairs in the room—one her own rocking-chair, one a broken kitchen chair. On the table lay a mass of manuscript, papers, books, and toilet articles. The room was an attic, and sloped so low at the eaves that Jean's leather trunk just fitted underneath. The air was close and warm.

The match in Jean's hand burned to his fingers, and Hild, stepping forward, blew it out. She laid her hands on his arm, looking into his face. So they stood, and the silence lengthened. A draught from the open window blew the door shut, and a draught from the passage blew it open again. It had no latch. Jean moved to shove a broken lead-pencil underneath to keep it closed. Then, with shaking hands, he picked up his pipe from the table, as if to fill it, then laid it down again.

"Oh, Jean, I'm glad I've found you," said

Hild.

"But I-I am not."

Hild looked at him.

"No, I am not. I have no money. I did not mean that you should find me here. I meant that you should wait—yes—until the time came when I could have you to come back. I can feed myself and pay for this"—he indicated the roof—"but to keep a lady—no."

"Just the same, I'm going to stay. I can work,

too. Jean, I'm sorry I ever went away."

"I would not be sorry. Sorry? What does it

mean. I do not know. Another time would you do the same?"

"I don't think so. Another time I think perhaps I'd understand."

"So. You think so. Do you expect me to be

sorry, too?"

"I think you were sorry then. Don't turn me out again, Jean. I have come back to stay—to help you all I can. I won't complain. I'll share whatever is good enough for you—this—if we can manage nothing better. I'm well and strong again, and fit to help."

"But-there is something more."

"Then tell me what it is."

He turned her about so that all the light from the

lamp fell on her face and held her there.

"Understand," he said. "Once I told you to marry me. What did I mean? I meant be my wife—yes, wait on me, do as I said, be my servant —my woman—yes?"

"Yes, and I did marry you, and I am-what you

say."

"So. It is not enough. You were all that. It was well with me. Then all at once it was not well with me. There came a new thing to me—big—oh, and beautiful! Something to make one to suffer and to live. You did it—I saw you, in a moment, like a star that is a flower or a flower that is a star—far away, oh, far away, but lovely. I have not words. It is not that I make love to you. That

would be foolishness, I tell you, that is all. I saw you all at once like this. Before, you were minea thing of flesh and blood to make life smooth to me, to do what I said, and to be like my hand or my foot -obedient and useful. Presto! this was all changed. You were of a sudden-what you areso. Listen and understand. I will not have it. It is to work I am here, to set music for the world to hear. If you are near me you make me see and hear you instead of my visions. Only one thingonly one thing! If you can stay-and love me! Then I could work, then I would—yes, then I would work! But to see you, to know that if I take you I shall see hate in your eyes, that is not possible. I can let you go, yes, but if you stay you must be like this." He laid his hand on his violin. "You must make your home in my soul. When we play together it is so. So must you live. Your eyes must be mine; your mind, it must answer mine; your heart, it must wait on mine. You must have no thought but of me-only of me. So I can keep you-only so-because I love you. Do you understand?"

For the first time since her marriage Hild heard Jean speak from his soul to her soul. He reached her and lifted her as he did when he played. She answered the searching of his eyes with the yielding of her own. What he saw led him to speak again.

"Love—it is dreadful," he said, speaking in French. "It is like death and birth. It is the world-

force taking one, yes, and using one as it will. You give yourself to it, and you are lost. You are a woman, and I tell you so. Every rapture has its double in suffering. I tell you that. I see the beautiful beyond in you, and I seek it—and you give and give. Perhaps I spoil your beauty, perhaps you lose health and life while I search. Perhaps it is not there after all—the beyond—or I lose sight of it and give up, and you are to me only a woman whose life is spent. But you—Perhaps you have children, and they grow up and leave you, and bring you sorrow year by year. Perhaps.

"But love is beautiful. It is that from which we come—yes—and return to some day. A woman without love is like seaweed resting on a sunny shore, at peace. But one day the tide comes high and carries her away. Such is love. Will you come with me? I am asking you. Or will you go

away?"

"Jean, I want to stay with you. Let me."

"Let you?" She heard in his voice something new and ringing and exquisite, and when she looked up it was there in his eyes and face—it was even in the palms of the hands that pressed her arms. A new Jean stood before her. All the boy in him, fresh and undefiled; all the genius in him, pure and transcendent; all the man in him lifted her gaze. She hardly knew him. He let her go, stepping away, and she moved about the poor room, making it decent while he watched. She folded and piled to-

gether the clothes she found scattered. She drew down the tattered blind. She pulled the mattress and clothes from the bed and made it again smoothly. She laid the rug beside it. She came back to the table and cleared it, laying the papers and books on Jean's trunk. She wiped the oil from the outside of the lamp. She drew her chair beside the table. All the time her heart was singing. She did not know why. She only knew that a moment had come to which the years of her life had led, that it was hers—a gift.

"Would you rather I went?" she asked him, softly, her head drooping so that he looked on waves of soft hair. He put his hand beneath her chin and raised

it, so that she could not but meet his eyes.

"You are tired. Yes—go and lie down on my bed and shut your eyes. I am going to play to you—oh, I shall play. I have been lonely; I shall tell you that. I have struggled with my soul; I shall tell you that. You are here where I see you and have you; I shall tell you that. All the things I cannot speak I will tell you. Shut your eyes and listen, and sleep."

CHAPTER XIX

THE struggle for a foothold on a narrow platform many times too crowded may or may not be amusing in proportion to the fall that threatens. It is, however, sure to be interesting. In something of this spirit Hild and Jean attacked the facts of existence. There is a limit to the anxiety caused in human minds by external conditions. A clerk may struggle to pay his life insurance as desperately as a day-laborer to meet the demands of a tradeunion, though one works for the comfort of his dear ones in a future he will not share, and the other for mere security from starvation on the inevitable rainy day. So Hild found that, the day's food and lodging secured, she could sleep as soundly, laugh as light-heartedly as if there were not just such another period of uncertainty to be lived through tomorrow. She even found that the completeness of their poverty had the effect of hardening her to sights and smells which, afterward remembering, turned her sick and faint. Clearly, Jean did not mind, and with passionate purpose she steeled herself to shut her eyes on much. She asked once if she might write to her mother for money, and Jean answered, roughly:

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"Then what I give you—it is not enough? It is this you thought when you came to me, 'If it is bad—very bad—I can so easily cry to mama'?"

She did not speak again of the plan.

She sent a note to Mme. Cavari to explain that she had found Jean, and as soon as it was possible went to see her friend. Mme. Cavari was kind but clearly puzzled, and felt bound to say a few words of warning.

"One can only understand by supposing that you are very much in love," she said, "and remember, my dear, that men do not always love longest the

women who make sacrifices for them."

Hild looked at her as if she were inclined to answer, but she did not do so, and Cavari was left to wonder what the shifting thought was that Hild had not cared to speak.

Marcia Rale, when she saw Hild, was more em-

phatic in her disapproval.

"I hope you and Art will come to see us when we've got a little better place," said Hild. "Every one is so queer I feel as if I'd done something awful

-run off with somebody or something."

"Well, I think you have done something awful, if anybody has. Other women make hash of their lives to protest against the way women are treated, but you, and women like you, make life harder for the women who come after. I think that's the mean thing. You're like a striker that goes back to work on any terms, only you haven't got the excuse of

starvation. I haven't any use for you, and I won't come to see you. I think you're a fool, if you're not worse. As long as Jean was half-way decent to you you couldn't bear him, but he'd only got to treat you like the dirt under his feet to make you act like it."

So Hild's return to Jean was made as difficult as it could be. In any case it would have been difficult enough. She wondered at her own determination when she had time, but her days were too full for much thought. It was a time of doglike endurance without much relief. Jean snarled at her, made her wait on him, asking of her anything he might have asked of the roughest servant, and through it all she was only conscious of an eagerness to comply, a vivid readiness to minister to him, soul and body, thus coming strangely upon happiness.

They lived like waifs, one by one dropping at pressure of need the niceties of life. Sleeping, eating, working, living in their one attic room, they were exposed to the humiliation of a common mirror, cracked at that, common hooks for their clothes, even a common cake of soap. Having made Hild see all that she could do without, Jean began the teaching of all that she could do. He took her to Percer's with him and made her sing; he even taught her a few simple dance-steps, which she learned readily, and with which she earned applause. She looked so young, with released hair and short skirts, that her prettiness told with the audience. Jean's

music had a mesmeric effect upon her. It directed her more clearly than any words could. It woke in the girl, trained upon the traditions of Puritanism, a vivid springing creature, who, once stirred, took possession of all she found. So transmuted, Hild lived between sordidness and a freedom, colored high, scented finely, glorious and thrilling to her spirit. It had all come about through loving Jean, as in one night she had learned to love him. All that was temperamental in her had found itself to give to him then, and all that was lawless and primitive emerged by the same way. She was not sure that she was being what her mother would call good, and she was very sure she did not care. She let go with wide-open hands, that did not reach to catch it back, all thought of respectability. She longed to be as much the creature of Jean's thought as one of his compositions. It was because of this surrender that she could dance, smiling into smokewreathed faces, obeying the message of Jean's music as if she were the body and it the soul. Afterward she would follow him home through the streets, go with him in at the narrow courtyard with its rank sounds and odors, up the long black stairs to their sloping attic room. There she would lay his supper, count their earnings, wait on him, and if he called her come with shining eyes. When it suited him he could repay her with a bounty that knew no reserve. In secret hours he came like a king to seek her where she waited, fortressed in imagination

which had to be taken, attended by susceptibilities that had to be won.

When, in the ups and downs of those weeks, there was not enough money to supply a full number of meals a day for both, Hild was not allowed to suffer. She saw her husband go ill fed because she could not help herself, and she never heard him complain.

Hild was not surprised to see Hanbury at Percer's one night, and she made a way of speaking to him as she took the collection. He asked her if Jean would mind if he joined them when they left.

"I don't know," Hild hesitated. "You will just have to try and see. Jean is funny."

"What about you?" asked Hanbury.

"Oh, I'm all right."

They had only time for these few words, but, to her pleasure, Jean was civil when Hanbury spoke to him a little later on the street, and the talk between them came with that readiness which sometimes makes short work of human division. She did not understand much of it, but felt its scope, and listened. A few minutes later she was arranging supper for the two men, and Hanbury was settled on the top of her trunk. The quick meeting of the two, like friends rejoined, threw a new pleasure into Hild's life.

The connection, which advanced to friendship, proved the beginning of better conditions for Hild and Jean. Through Hanbury they secured an engagement in vaudeville, and were able to put by a little money from day to day. As the hot weather

came on and their room became unendurable they moved into more convenient quarters in a better neighborhood. Here Arthur Rale and Hanbury were constant visitors. Arthur had given up everything to work for the Socialist Club, of which he was a member. Hild was cautioned to say nothing of these matters, and she grew to have a feeling like fear when she thought of Jean's connection with them. There was so much secrecy, the need for which she did not understand, and so much gravity in the treatment of issues which seemed to her absurd. It might be amusing to discuss a period of time when human nature should be transformed and men more considerate of one another than of themselves, but it did not seem to be a matter for which to sacrifice even a moment's charm. Therefore, the serious warning from Marcia and Arthur Rale, and a word, more convincing than anything else, from Hanbury oppressed Hild with a sense of danger. She tried to make Jean feel this, too, but he had a stare which could silence her and which he did not hesitate to use. It was soon after Hild had made unwilling vows of discretion that she went to a meeting with Jean and the Rales where Hanbury was to speak. She was curious to hear him and to see a group of his followers.

In spite of her prejudice, gathered from Rale's wildness, she was seized and manipulated by the concentrated eagerness of the audience which filled and crowded the bare room. She was to be reached

by earnestness, and here it was intense. She took a seat near Jean, curiosity hastily withdrawn before awe. She had always felt Hanbury's isolation in a world of inferiors, but, now witnessing his reception here when, stepping onto the stage, he faced the room, she saw that her intuition was to be proved just.

He began to speak without attempt at effect or even much emphasis. He pointed out the peculiar difficulties of the moment and the dangers to society if the difficulties were not overcome. He talked, his eyes fixed on a paper he fingered. Once or twice he paused to look up, and when he did this the waiting for his next word was like that of a man shipwrecked who signals to a passing ship and waits to

see if it will reply.

The heat of his argument was fierce, but he never lost control of it. He used it, and gave to his hearers the complete result of its working upon his reason. Hild could see that there was surprise and emotion in the faces of his hearers. For Hanbury, after telling them of the need of reform, spent the hour in denouncing the present movement toward it. He asked them to believe him when he said that the tyrants of peace were better than the tyrants of war. He said that while the men followed their present leaders they would lose double whatever they might gain. He had fought the same battle elsewhere and had come to America to fight it here. Labor at the mercy of capital was bad, but labor at the mercy of men subject to no laws

of decency, kindliness, or expedience was worse. That was what was happening. Hanbury had spent a fortune and the best of a life in combating this perversion of the labor movement, and he was perfectly prepared to give anything else he might come to possess. Did his hearers believe him?

Hild joined in the subdued cheering that replied. The sound was suggestive of hidden force so incalcu-

lable that she shivered.

Continuing, Hanbury leaned on the back of a chair and regarded the faces lifted below him.

"These are mere words, my friends," he said, "but there are actions behind. I am the man to lead this strike which is nearly on us. Those who are carried away from my following by wild promises are those who cannot think into the future. It is these who need me most, and it is these I mean to help. The men of brains and malice who are making dollars out of desperate ignorance can take this warning from me. I will oppose them every step of the way. I will make this strike impossible to operate. I will work for the owners before I will see my men embark upon starvation without hope of arriving on any shore. Moderate demands now will find only a show of resistance. I have talked with men who know. I am trusted to ask what is just. If the men strike for all that is demanded for them by others who are not trusted, there will be such opposition as they have never before met, and they will be so impoverished as to have to come

to any terms. I have prepared the way for reasonable concessions, and have been doing so for years. Do you think I will see this work wasted? There

is Washington. And I have weapons."

Before Hanbury had finished Arthur Rale had risen noisily and left the room. A suppressed rush of voices swelled as Hanbury sat down. Hild, reverent of him, heard Jean say, "Good, very good!" and saw that he continued smoking undisturbed.

Marcia said, "They don't all like it, but they'll take anything on earth from him."

Mme. Cavari was in the room and joined Hild later.

"What did it all mean?" Hild asked her in a whisper.

Cavari glanced around.

"It means that he had pitted himself against desperate men," she answered. "What will come of it I don't know. I don't dare think."

"They can't hurt him?" Hild asked.

"My dear, they can and will unless a miracle happens."

"Can't he keep away from them? Oh, Mme.

Cavari, do make him!"

"That's just what no one can do."

Hanbury had asked Jean to tell the audience a few of his experiences, and Jean had risen to do so. He began in leisurely style to narrate such things as occurred to him. His ease and sense of the pictur-

esque and the quaint hesitations and inflections and choice of words gained the attention of the roomful of hearers. He told something of his wanderings as a boy, of his early days in Paris, of his destitution in London. "Ah, but London!" he said. "There it is that you will see the things that make you to wonder do we live to-day, when men have begun to think and to speak what they think, or do we live in the Dark Ages. It is in London that one sees everywhere those women whose sons, perhaps, are grown men. The faces of these women are red with much beer. They wear bonnets, so, and big shawls. They are warm. They are not uncomfortable, they are not starved. No. But their eyes are small and red like their faces; their brows are narrow; they are animals themselves, and the animals they have bred, they are worse animals than themselves. They and their mothers and their mothers' mothers have lived like animals. If you mimic a thing long enough you become like it. Is it not so? They have had enough—oh yes, for are they not alive? Would they be alive if they had been starved? I ask you! Some of them are even fat. Do not be unreasonable and tell me that they are starved. They have enough, it is proved; but what beyond?

"Look into their homes. But the worst! A woman to bear it—must die—or, in England, she must get drunk. If you are drunk you can bear better to be hit, you can bear better to be dirty and ugly and ignored. So. This is what it is to have

enough! I ask you. Would it not be better to give them just a little less?

"One must be very wise to understand what to do about these things. I am not wise. I do not even try to be. Mr. Hanbury, he tells me one thing. I have known Mr. Hanbury, and other men, nearly as wise as he, who think like him. These men, they tell me that when some have too little and others too much it were well to take from the last and give to the first. It seems simple. It even seems right. The arguments against this system (I read them in the paper, for these wise men cannot be met in so simple a way as I met Mr. Hanbury) they are more—what you say—complicated. It is natural it should seem to me that Mr. Hanbury is right. I ask you—is it not?

"In Paris I had a friend. He loved a girl—but alas! to marry with the French—it is a luxury. She loved him. It would seem that to wait and to work were all that was wanted to make them happy, would it not? She was a good girl. She could cook and clean and mend. She could have borne fine children and kept them clean and healthy. But, yes! She was a good girl. Her father—he worked hard, but there were many little ones in the house, and the girl had no 'dot.' She helped her mother with the little children, and she waited and kept herself, hoping some day to have a house of her own to scrub and clean, a man she loved to make happy, and little ones to cherish, so. It is a good hope for a

woman—do you not think? The French women—they like work—they are good at it.

"Very well. One day her father's employer sees her, and he thinks she is pretty. That is too bad, is it not? There follows several things. The father -he is helpless-and for the sake of her family, and yet to save herself for her husband, the girl leaves home and looks for work. Here and there she asks for work. Nowhere does she find it. I have known what that is myself. It is not good to live through. But I am not a woman. I can only starve. A woman, even if she is starving, must be suspicious of help. Is it not so? This girl-she finally asked at a fashionable shop for something to do. The man, he looked at her. She was pretty and tall and good to the eyes. He asked her one question, only one. You would think perhaps it was 'Are you a hard-working girl?' or maybe 'Are you a good girl?' or maybe 'How much wages do you ask?' No, it was none of these. He asked her if she had a protector. 'Because,' he said, 'the pay is not enough to keep a girl' and they did not like to have girls starving on their hands. That was it. The girl, she got a protector. It was very easy. She is now a very famous woman. Oh, but yes. She has motor-cars, and she has robes for which she pays money which would keep you and me for many years. My friend, he is well known, too, and it is odd, is it not?—he gives me advice that agrees with Mr. Hanbury's. He says to me: 'Jean, the rich,

they are too rich. They have so much without effort that they think they must have all. And the poor, they are too poor. They have so little that they are not surprised when the little they have is taken away. No; it is wrong. We shall soon set it right.' That is what he says. He is now an outlaw in his own land. The woman-what is she? She takes and takes for her pleasure, and she is taking from good women what she has. She is no use. She is worse -she is hurtful. It is a pity. She was a good girl. She would have had fine boys and girls, and she would have cared for them well.

"Mr. Hanbury, he has asked me to tell you these things. I think you are good to listen, and I think I have said enough. If one is to comment, it is not I who will—I am a poor man and a musician. But -who can tell?-one day I may be a rich man. I shall be glad. And maybe-who knows?-those other wise men who think differently, perhaps they will make me understand what seems now so very complicated, why it is that when there is enough for every one, every one does not have enough."

When Jean had finished Hild looked around to see that Arthur had re-entered the room and was applauding Jean furiously. Marcia's face had an ugly look, and to Hild there came, storming her reason, the fear that danger of an unnatural kind lay waiting

its chance to pounce.

During the talk that followed the speeches Marcia Rale drew Hild aside and said:

"Look here, Hild; Mr. Hanbury and I have got an idea, and we want you to help us. There isn't a bit of reason why you shouldn't do it. You know we live in a house on Eighteenth Street, quite a nice sort of place, and there is an empty room there now. We want you and Jean to take it. You could share my sitting-room, and it would be ever so much better in every way. You could get some piano pupils in the fall if you had a decent place to teach in. The rent isn't more than you are paying now, I'm pretty sure. Try to persuade Jean."

"Thanks," said Hild, wondering. "I'll ask Jean."

"You can manage it if you try."

Just then Hild turned and, looking over her shoulder, met Hanbury's eyes full upon her. She felt sure that he knew what they were saying, and that if he wished for this arrangement it would certainly come to pass.

"I'll try," said Hild, not knowing that she spoke.

"Be sure," Marcia directed.

CHAPTER XX

THE scheme suggested by Marcia on the night of Jean's first address to the Artists' Social Club worked out with an ease which Hild regarded with suspicion. Jean was approached by Hanbury himself, and consented to remove himself and Hild to a house on the west side without much comment or any hesitation. When Hild saw the two rooms which were to be theirs under this arrangement, at a figure surprisingly agreeing with the one they had to pay before, she said nothing, but looked for an explanation to Marcia. Marcia gave none, and Hild thought that her perplexity was a source of amusement to the other. She had come to dislike and distrust Marcia; but she equally trusted and believed in Hanbury, and she determined to ask him to tell her the truth. She watched her chance, which was long in coming, and meanwhile she had time to discover that the household was made up of Hanbury's friends, and that all were alike occupied with some sort of altruistic work. Different kinds and degrees of socialism were to be found here, but all were agreed in looking to Hanbury for the final solution of problems. Hild listened to much nonsense, and was by no means taken in by it. She liked to hear

Jean attack the conversation, as he sometimes did when it soared too far from the solid ground of reason, attempting to map out spaces which are to be surveyed by no existing implements. Hanbury rarely joined in these discussions, but he often asked Jean to speak at his meetings, and Jean was with him much of the time. Arthur Rale came to see them at irregular intervals, and talked wildly while Jean thought his own thoughts. If Marcia or Hanbury came into the room Arthur would not stay. Marcia felt this, Hild knew, and visited her bitterness on Hild and Jean.

The great strike had been for the moment averted, and Hild understood that Hanbury was at the bottom of its failure. He grew ill and haggard under the strain of work which he imposed upon himself, and Hild thought that he was something worse than discouraged—she thought he was beaten. She felt near him, and tenderly of him, without anything to account for the feeling. Her poise at Hanbury's side had always been mysterious, and she was used to being conscious of that which she could not explain.

She asked him, on an occasion when she found him alone in their sitting-room, if they had him to thank for their improved housing, "because I should not mind thanking you," she added.

"I should mind," he put her off, not unkindly.

"If I promise not to thank you, will you tell me?" she asked.

Now he looked at her.

"I want you to remember that you have me to thank for nothing, and that I am in your debt," he told her.

She believed him, and only much later thought to wonder what he had meant.

The summer advanced, and Hild was carried forward on a warm tide of life which kept her away from the quiet pools and green shores. She was conscious of exhilarating motion, smooth and rapid, with occasional intervals of danger and difficulty.

There came, however, a moment of arrival when she had to find her feet in spite of whirling currents.

She had known for some time that Jean was adjusted to some new hope, and that Hanbury shared the secret. One evening when Marcia and Hild sat together in Hild's room Hanbury told them what it was, and Jean listened, his pipe in play and his eyes on the far wall.

Hanbury had some time previously been given an original libretto for an opera. He had been for weeks waiting for a famous playwright and writer of blank verse to put some polishing touches to the book, and now he had submitted it to Jean as a subject for him. Everett had already promised to see the thing through, and Cavari would sing the woman's part. Jean was to go forward with the work as quickly as he could. He was pleased with his theme.

"Pleased-" Jean turned with heat upon Han-

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bury. "Do not talk to me of being pleased. Am I a stone? Am I a political gentleman? I ask you. No, I am not. Do you say a man is pleased when he leaves the prison and breathes the air? Then do not talk to me of being pleased."

Questions and answers sped in each other's wake, and at last the women settled themselves while Hanbury fingered the manuscript, explaining the

drift of its theme before reading it.

Parting the sultry atmosphere of the August night, a breeze from the river, cool and fresh, came in at the window, moving the curtains as it passed. Rapping and humming sounds, so familiar to the four that they came and went unnoticed, ascended from the streets. As Hanbury began to read, his hearers were able to imagine themselves flown over miles of country to a western factory-town at a period when unions were immature and capital not so immensely centralized. They followed the drama, absorbed in it from the beginning to the end, scarcely understanding how skilfully the difficult material had been manipulated, so convincing was the effect.

The movement of the story centered about four people and a child. There was Mason, the owner of the factory; "Garry," the foreman, who by virtue of his able mind and advanced opinions controls the men and is feared by Mason therefor. Between these two there is an enmity established in their bcyhood. Garry is married to Hannah, the heroine of the story, and they have one child, Molly. Besides

these, Hannah's brother is also a workman in the factory. He is a silent youth, considered of no account, prone to sit in corners, and once in a while to say an odd and disturbing thing. Every one loves him, however, and he is called by all "The Brother."

The drama begins with a scene in Hannah's house. The sun is setting and the room is rosy with its light.

The child is playing on the floor.

Hannah enters and, singing at her work, suddenly stops and listens, hearing loud voices outside. She runs to the window, and tells the child what she sees. Garry is approaching with a group of excited men. He parts with them and comes in at the door, moodily kissing Hannah and the child. Hannah questions him, and at last he tells her that Mason has dared to dock the wages of some of the men and that they do not intend to submit to it. They will certainly strike for better terms than they are at present getting, and the owner must give in or they will starve. As he talks, growing more and more excited, Brother comes in and stands quietly at the door, his long hair hanging over his face, and his eyes on Garry, who seems to feel something restraining, for he stops and turns, only to see Molly and Brother playing together.

Hannah pleads with Garry, telling him all the sorrow, all the danger he intends to court. The lines of her part here ascended by gentle ways to greatness. It was a bit of writing fine enough in itself to justify the whole play, and there was more

like it to come. At the end of the scene Brother, in his way, comes to Hannah and whispers words in her ear, and as she looks up at him in wonder the curtain descends.

In the second act the strike is in progress. The scene is a series of typical cottages in the precincts of a factory. Hannah is oppressed by the feeling that Garry is responsible for the continuing of the strike after Mason has conceded much. His bitterness is increased by suffering, and he will yield nothing. Hannah, in pity for those poorer than herself, and hoping that Garry may give in when he sees his own dear ones hungry, gives away her last provisions, and tells him what she has done. While they talk a group of men who wish to return to work come to attack their house. They are beginning to throw stones and to threaten Garry and Hannah when Brother appears at the door. The darkness is descending, and in the half-light he seems unlike himself, standing straight and tall, his eyes brilliant. He startles and awes the men, and he tells them to be patient for two days.

The third act sees Brother's strange control over the people whom he chooses to influence. He goes to Mason and persuades him to go to see Hannah. Mason does so, thinking that she may be persuaded to use her influence with her husband toward ending the strike. While he is in the cottage Garry enters, and there are sharp words between the men. At last, however, they are led to sit down and discuss

matters, Brother standing, unnoticed, between them, and as they talk their personal antagonism seems to wane. Brother watches them, his face growing beautifully bright. Once Mason turns to look over his shoulder, saying that he feels there is some one in the room. Garry answers, "No one but Brother."

In the last act affairs are adjusted at the factory and comfort restored to the working-people. But Brother tells them that he is going away. Hannah tries to keep him, and Garry and Mason do their best to influence him to stay. He will not say where he goes or why. He silently makes ready to go. It is winter, and the snow is falling fast. Little Molly cries and clings to him. He kisses her, and she is quieted. They all watch him go out of the door, pausing a moment to turn and smile and then vanish in the night. They look at each other without speaking. At last Molly says:

"You know they need a brother there."

Hild understood, looking at Jean, what he saw in the lines. He began eagerly to explain. He pointed out that much of the acting would be independent of lines, and would only have a musical accompaniment. It would make up a form of opera in which he had always believed. Jean waved his hands, he flourished his pipe, he set on end a lock of hair, and then he said: "Why do you not say something? Is it possible that you do not see what I shall do with it? Have you no souls? No, I

see it. You have not. It is clear. I have a soul, and I can hear the music I shall make. But you, you have to wait until it is there before you. That is a curious thing. Because to me it is so much more beautiful before it has form." He glanced pitifully at Hanbury for understanding. "It will never be so beautiful again," he despaired, as depressed as five minutes ago he had been elated. "Never! And the pain of trying to make it as I can hear it." He put his face in his hands.

The others talked of the plans for the production of the opera. Hanbury intended to make it possible for Jean to work steadily upon it, he said, and they hoped to arrange for its appearance in the following spring. They apportioned the parts in fancy, and talked far into the night, even Marcia caught and held by interest. There was a young girl's part, which Hanbury wanted Hild to take.

When she went to her room that night she found Jean sitting near the window. She glanced at him half a dozen times before she spoke, sheltered by her hair, which she had let fall and began to pleat for the night.

"What do you think of it, Jean?" she asked, hypnotized by the fear of being foolish into being foolhardy. Jean, however, did not hear her question. One long braid hung over her shoulder before she said again, "It is lovely, isn't it?"

Then Jean looked her way, and gradually she seemed to emerge for him out of a mist of unrealities.

She watched his eyes warm, deepen, and then retire behind a slide of indignant protest.

"It is abominable, and I will not have it!" he

told her.

"I don't know what you are talking about," Hild

answered, ready for anything.

"I tell you I know that you are pretty. Is it not enough? Am I never to forget? I have other things to occupy me, and I will not be interrupted. You interrupt me when you look at me so. You understand?"

"Oh, Jean, do talk to me for a minute. Do you

think the opera will be a success?"

"I think it is my escape from the shades. I think it is the door to the future. I think it is great, yes; and it is mine, even as you are, my little one. No, you have interrupted me, and I can no longer think. I will go to bed. To-morrow I will work. For one night it shall be perfect in my soul. I will hold it there and be happy for one night."

CHAPTER XXI

EVERYTHING conspired in favor of the new opera. Everett took it up with enthusiasm, and more than once joined their party during the small hours of the night to discuss its progress. Jean was composing with ease and rapidity, and the thing ran on greased wheels.

Their life these days forced the hours in riotous confusion away. It was morning, and Hild was dressing with deft haste, while Jean lay heavily sleeping under the cheap cotton sheet. It was noon, and she was listening for his step, so that his coffee should be ready, but not overboiled. It was afternoon, and she was listening, sewing, while he worked. It was night, and they were dining somewhere alone, or with Marcia and Hanbury. She was playing for Jean, and below them was a moving human mass seen through the haze of smoke. She was singing just like a milkmaid, a school-girl, a workhouse dame, a factory hand. It was Sunday night, and she was listening to Hanbury or Jean speaking to the Artists' Club.

Sometimes Jean took her for long rambles through the ugly parts of the town, and they saw lurid sights and heard soul-searing sounds. Some-

times he and she made their way over Fort Lee ferry, and were soon in the green woods. At these times he would make holiday for them both. He could tell her of things he had seen-of cathedrals, like the everlasting souls of domed forests holding one with the spell of all history; of human hopes and fears and faiths without number; of cities, the glory of which such buildings were, where the spirit of modern devastation had encroached. "The smell of new paint and the sound of the automobilethey are there-most to be noticed where romance still breathes." And Hild listened and burned to hear more, and wondered how she had cared to live her days out once. When they returned to their rooms there was always a sequel of some sort to the day-a controversy with some one, in which Jean's heat and free use of violent phrases often conquered better weapons; a sudden sally on their privacy by half a dozen people bent on frivolity.

There were tears for Hild in these days as well as laughter. Jean often abused her with the complete unreasonableness of an irritated parrot. He ignored her for days at a time. She had no rights and no privileges. She had to be at home when he came, and she had to go with him when he pleased, without asking why or where they were going. She had to keep silence in companionship. Even a rustled paper or the sound of a pen might be an offense unpardonable. She was, in short, the oppressed woman of whom one hears much and sees

little in these emancipated times. And with it all the color and movement of her life—the contrast between immense hopes and grim fears-kept her infinitely alive. An hour in which Jean had made himself unbearable might be followed by many in which they sought and found high romance. Dreams of a day when a bejeweled and bestarred world should clamor at their feet, when ladies, with nothing better to do, would steal Jean's handkerchiefs as souvenirs, when managers would vie with one another in paying enormous sums for half an hour of Jean's time, were varied by serious debates as to whether a certain piece of silver should go for chops or car-fare. Immediate dangers threatened a rich present, and Hild thrilled and warmed to the treatment.

She had her small taste of public success, too, to inspire her, and it acted on her with magical effect. She was too wholly absorbed in Jean's will to be self-conscious, but she seemed liberated to new contacts. Her voice had improved, and through Hanbury a vocal instructor had become interested enough to take her in hand, and at odd moments she worked hard to conquer bad habits in her singing. She could dance to Jean's music with originality and charm, and she could act with him. He had only to tell her what to do, and she would do it, but no one else could teach her. Hanbury said to Jean:

"It's interesting and curious. It is as if you had

two bodies-hers and yours. What you conceive she

can accomplish."

"And that—is it strange to you?" asked Jean. "Does not a woman use that which she has for a man? Perhaps she has beauty—so! She gives it to a man to please him. Some women have much to give—others little. It is lucky when the man who asks much finds it. It is not always so."

"And if you had not asked of Hild all these

splendid things-what then?"

"That is a strange thing—yes, but strange!" said Jean, musing. "Women—they are not to be understood - no, not even if one studied them for life. And consider one's brains at the end! Do not try it, my friend. When I married Hild I asked of her so very little. Only to cook, to mend, to do what any woman could do as well. It was not unreasonable-no? But she-she would not. She failed. It surprised me-I conceal nothing-it made me astonished. And then-oh, but strange! I became mad. I became foolish. Many things happened. Of a sudden I ceased to be reasonable. I demanded of her-oh, everything-the impossible, all that is rare, more than any man who has sense would think for one minute of asking. And what happens, my friend? I get it all and more! Women-I do not understand them. I do not try."

Summer had burned itself out, and a short, exquisite autumn had rejoiced human hearts, and the writing of Jean's opera was far advanced.

Winter laid an icy hand on the town and, as the days went on, began a cruel thrusting with its frozen wind-swords, nearly defeating the young and fullblooded, sending the old and ill who were exposed to its merciless play back to sick-beds and sorrow. The season made little difference to Hild and her circle. They scarcely noticed the forbidding weather except when they had to face it to keep an agreement which meant food and roofing. They saw their way toward the completion of the opera. That was the tremendous thought that kept them all alike in a charmed atmosphere. Everett was prepared to push the thing. Cavari would sing in no opera till this one was ready. Jean worked with the most prodigal expenditure of nervous force. He scarcely rested, and as the days went on he forgot Hild. Their hours of recreation ceased. She was no more to him for the moment than was Marcia, not so much as his fiddle and the paper on which he wrote his scores. She scarcely resented it. An obsession seemed to be on them all. Hild sometimes felt that she, Jean, Marcia, Hanbury moved in a dim haze of unreal shapes which would one day dissolve and leave them in a world they did not know.

Arthur Rale alone of all Jean's friends seemed to be acceptable to him these days. Rale would come and talk in a voice of peculiar pitch, and Jean would listen, smoking and shaking his head, and then would play while the lines would soften in Rale's face, showing him a boy. Hild did not quite understand

the friendship, but she saw that Marcia did not like it, and she tried to put a stop to such frequent visits. Rale avoided Hanbury, but Hanbury seemed not to notice this. He was often away at this time. Mme, Cavari told Hild once that he was holding the fate of thousands in his two hands. If the pressure of his control were removed there would be such a disastrous social war as had never been known. No good could come of it, she explained, for the extremists demanded what it was impossible to give. They, at the moment, were powerful with the trade-unions, but while Hanbury was in the country they would not dare order a strike in opposition to him, so strong was his hold upon the minds of the men.

"It was to the interest of a dozen desperate men to remove him," Cavari added, looking at Hild.

Marcia was often away with Hanbury, and was much occupied when he was in New York with letters, telegrams, and work of all kinds. Hild was able to notice, however, that she was increasingly rude to Jean and her. Once she asked Hild if she intended to let things go on. Hild did not know what she meant and said so.

"Then I'll tell you, innocent," said Marcia.

"I don't think I care about being told." Hild

made to walk away.

"Your Jean and Art had better look out, that's all, or something will stop their pranks. You can tell them from me that I know the place on Sixteenth

Street is watched. Of course it'll be Art who gets caught, but it's Jean who's to blame. If he gets Art into trouble he won't get off, I'll promise him that. I know too much."

Hild had paused to hear these astonishing remarks to their finish; but she did not answer, knowing that she had no material with which to convince Marcia that she was wrong. It was partly because of this conversation that she formed a habit of going with Jean and Arthur as often as possible when they went out.

The orchestration of Jean's work was completed in January, and the thing, in the hands of a publisher, was to be produced after Easter. Every effort was made to rush it forward. It was timely, Everett pointed out with enthusiasm. A theater was found of suitable proportions and the advertising put under way. A train of consequent business kept Hanbury and Jean occupied. Hild, who had hoped for a change in Jean at the completion of the work, saw that to be normal again he must see his work successful. He had flung his soul into the composition, and it could only return to him on a wave of recognition and fame.

Her part in *Brother* interested her, and Cavari was pleased with the development of her voice. "It will never be great, but it will be enough, perhaps, to help you to a place of your own, because you can act as well as sing." She chose Hild as her under-study; and Hild, who could imitate, learned a

great deal from singing Cavari's part in Cavari's way. The rehearsals were things of despair. Everett expected perfection, and scolded till he got it. The crowd of men was difficult to handle artistically. A French painter was engaged to study the scenic effects and grouping, the costumes and tableaux. He and Jean chattered like excited sparrows.

"Take away all the ugliness of it and ye'll spile the sinse!" insisted Everett, too excited to remember that

he had of late made a study of vowel sounds.

M. Devereux looked helplessly to Jean, who said: "It is like this—you will see if you will listen! The streets of London, they are ugly—oh, but yes! But a mauve haze envelops them and—presto! a painter despairs to do them justice. Art, she is the haze over things of every day. So."

Everett charged upon a whispering group of chorus-

girls, and the chattering continued:

"That girl has spirit—temperament," said Devereux in French, pointing to Hild. "The eyes! The suppleness! I must talk to her."

Jean glanced at Hild, and then he lowered his eyes.

"When the clapping of hands—it deafens me—when I am hailed as the genius of the age—then I will look at her, yes—"he said, much to Devereux's bewilderment. "Now—you must not ask me. It is not best. You may talk to her if you wish. She is my wife."

One night when every one concerned in Brother was in a nervous condition, bordering on hysterics

with the women and belligerency with the men, Hild went with Rale and Jean to an outdoor meeting in one of the very poor streets off the Bowery. The night was mild for March, and a crowd collected rapidly, so that when the speaker rose the shoulders of the men pressed sharply together, and a shove set twenty people shoving likewise. Hild and Jean kept together with difficulty, but when the speaking began the crowd quieted down to listen. Hild saw at once that the spirit of the men was ugly. Once or twice as some sore theme was touched a low growl arose from hundreds of burly throats. were all sorts and kinds of workers there-Italians, whose happy faces Hild had noticed often, their red lips curled back from shining teeth, their small dark heads, glancing eyes, loosely set shoulders, and expressive hands, all moving merrily to the sense of words. Now they were sullen, lips puffed out, jaws heavy. There were big Swedes, and Germans red and stolid. There were men of no nationality, lowbrowed and furtive. Hild felt sorry that she had come. She listened to the speech with growing surprise. It was unlike any she had heard, deliberately calculated to rouse all that was rebellious in these men. It spoke to their ignorance and their greed. It rendered them devilish in their eagerness for destruction. Nothing untrue was said, but the truths chosen and said were those best unspoken, and those were left out that would have balanced the effect. The orator did not trouble himself to be

reasonable - these men did not want reason, they wanted food for their passions, and he gave it to them steaming from the fire. Sometimes he repeated a set of arguments in Italian. He knew his hearers. When he stopped, the light of fanatical energy on his face, Hild could feel the shudder of anger that shook the mass of men. The speech had not been long, and the men dispersed rapidly. Fifteen minutes afterward a solitary policeman strolled down the street and saw nothing.

Hild turned to Jean and Rale and found them

talking earnestly.

"It is not my business. It is best that it should not be," Jean was saying. "If I think of it- there is no way to tell what I shall think. No-I will go home. What I have seen to-night-it is like telling a child its stepmother abuses it. What is the good? Can the child do anything? After all, is any one else going to do any better for the child? It is time enough then to talk to him. No-I will not go to your meeting. No-I shall go home."

Hild saw a man touch Rale on the arm. They went away together, and she and Jean went home. For the first time in weeks he talked to her.

"I am not what you call a practical philosopher. No; human nature, she is strange. I can never see that you can reckon with her. Now she is like a tame kitten-one can play with her and watch her and stroke her in comfort. That is pleasant, is it not? But then, presto! she is a tigress and she jumps

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for one's throat—so—and one is quickly strangled. That is sad. And that is not all. A man, he spends his life in proving that she is a machine—oh, marvelous if you like-but always working according to law, and suddenly the machine stops, turns on him and devours him, or maybe flings about him a woman's arms. His theories—they stop like a watch that will not work. They are no good. And another—he begins at what he knows, and then he spends his life finding out why he knows it, and he gets confused and thinks the last is more important than the first—is not that very curious? A rose is very red, and that is good. Yes? To know that the red is that which the rose refuses to absorb out of the light that comes to her—and so it strikes back to our eves and we see red-is that so good as to know that the rose is red? I ask you! Music-it comes and frees our souls, and we find the beautiful. Shall we think of sound-waves? Is it not silly to worry so much about the way we are happy so long as we are happy? And a man may trace everything to brain-cells, and yet he may not know what to say when a child asks him why his ball stops rolling when it hits the wall."

"I'll be glad when Arthur Rale goes to Europe. Marcia says he is going before long."

"Europe. Ah!" Hild looked at him quickly. How alone he stood in a world of men! She had never before heard him express a personal desire, and now it was only voiced in two words. The sound

of them lingered in her thoughts, tinging her entire outlook while they mounted the stairs and while she moved about the room bringing him his supper and his pipe. When she handed him the matches she lingered before him. Half ashamed of herself. she slipped into his line of vision. She knew that the dampness of the evening had waved her hair in tender curls about her brow and neck and set a fresh color on her cheeks. She knew, and was ashamed of knowing, that her thin blouse and shabby skirt fitted well, and that her lines from neck to knee had a charm for Jean, as for any man. She held herself still, her eyes lowered. In a moment, as she knew Jean was looking at her, she would have raised her eyes slowly-and they were brown eyes and big and deep, and her lips were red. But before that moment came Jean rose and moved away.

"I think," he said, deliberately, taking his fiddle from its case, "that one day we will have—what you call—a honeymoon." He could look at her now across the brown body of his violin. "We will go away, you and I, and we will see and do strange things, lovely things. I will teach you much. I have taught you hard things, it is true. I will teach you sweet things then. It is a difficult thing to be a wife. You must know when to entrance, and when not; when to be beautiful, and when not. One day your time will come. But not yet. I think it will be when my opera is called great. That—I think will be your day. But now—the

soul of me does not want you. It is exhausted—gone from me. No, I do not want you, except just for use. You are useful—yes. I say it. And you have learned to work. Be content. For the present be like the woman who lives in the butcher's shop. She is placid. She is fat. She is there where you expect her to be. Her fingers—they are too thick to beckon; her figure—it leaves nothing to be imagined. She knows what is looked for in her, and she gives no more. She is a woman who would be just as satisfactory if she had a cold in her head. It would not matter. You understand? It is this I require of you. I have explained."

Hild for the first and last time cried out: "Oh,

Jean, I can't. I'm not like that."

He flung aside his violin and took her by the shoulders.

"Understand!" he said. "You think because I have let you go on that I am a fool. I am not. I know what to do—yes, very well. You will do as I say. I cannot be always a lover. You are to me to-day familiar as that old cup which I drink from. What is there for me to find out? If I need you I call you. You are mine.

"There is something more. A day will come when I am ready for you to be my hope and my occupation. Then, I have told you, we will tread Eden. It will be beautiful, worth every pain. And all the time you are here and I am here we know this time will some. Now—no! I have told you what to

do. Do it. You are not thick and ugly like the butcher's wife. But you are a woman—and you do not need to look at me with eyes like two immortal songs. You are a woman, yes—and if you will think you are thick and ugly, it is enough. You will not disturb me then."

CHAPTER XXII

HILD was glad when, after a good many changes of mind, it was settled that Jean should conduct the orchestra on the first night of the production of *Brother*. She did not know how otherwise he would manage to get through the performance. She had visions of a Jean rampant, charging an indifferent audience. She felt surer, too, of success with her own small share in the opera if she could have Jean's baton to watch. It was a baton to obey.

The day of success or failure came with a wild flurry of last preparations. There was a rehearsal whenever there was not another rehearsal. Everett had run through his entire and considerable collection of oaths, and had drank as many cocktails as was at all good for him. Mme. Cavari was driving around and around Central Park in her motor trying to work off an excess of nervousness. She confided to Hild that if she did not break down and run away it would be because a miracle had happened, and Hild, really alarmed, had gone to Everett with a face the color of chalk. When Everett heard the awful news he swore loud and long.

"She break down," he stormed. "Bless yer

innocent young heart! Put that kind of breaking down into some of them cabbage-heads on the front line of the chorus and ye'll make an opera of it and not a squalling-match."

When Hild came home from this interview she found in her sitting-room Jean, Arthur Rale, and, to her immense surprise and pleasure, the unexpected figure of Mert Massam. It was a Mert Massam decorated beyond all recognition with a frock-coat of enormous size and a pale-blue tie under the leathery creases of his chin. He greeted Hild with one of the rare contortions of the face which he intended for a smile and submitted a limp hand to be shaken. Hild brightened to all he called to mind, and attacked him gaily with questions. It appeared that he had been saving money for years, and he showed her with monumental pride the crisp bills into which a "regular wheelbarrowful" of pennies had been converted. He had hitherto kept his wealth secret, because, as he said with a twinkle, "they'd be wantin' a feller to buy clothes, er somethin' he didn't want."

Hild admired his costume, and found that Senator Carson had bestowed it upon him years before, and it had been carefully put away with the pennies. "Miry thought it was fer buryin' me in. Nope. That ain't Mert Massam. They can bury me in a potato sack. Don't care."

It appeared that Rale knew of a room in the house where he lived which Mert could have for the night

at a figure which he announced himself prepared to pay. The three men were just off for the place. Hild saw that Jean was restless, and she let him go, but as he turned toward the door she called him back.

"What is the matter with Arthur Rale?" she asked, her eyes on the doorway through which the young man had passed.

"How should I know? He is full of strangeness."

Jean was impatient.

"Jean, there's something wrong with him, really there is," she persisted.

"I do not attend to the livers of my friends. No.

It is not my business."

Hild was touched and pleased that Mert should have dared and spent so much to hear Jean's opera. It seemed to her a good omen. She had wonderful visions of all the desired openings of closed doors which success would work. It was that to which she looked. She had a consciousness of constantly trying to possess herself of something infinitely valuable, only to be reached through her life with Jean, and toward which this evening's success would certainly carry her. He had, in his own way, promised her things. He had directed her to leave the theater as soon as her part was finished and to meet him at Percer's. This excited her. It was so long since Jean had been anything to her personally that the idea of having him again as the uncertain but exhilarating companion of a few months before was one of extraordinary delight. He must always

direct her life, but he could also exquisitely enliven it, and it was this for which she hoped with throbbing heart.

Jean and Hild exchanged no word before they left for the theater, and they parted as soon as they reached the door. Hild would have liked to have given a touch or a sound of sympathy and confidence. But Jean's face daunted her. She went down a long tiled passage to her dressing-room and made herself ready. Then she went into the wings, which were windy and full of perspiring men. At the door of Cavari's dressing-room she paused, wondering if she dared to knock. She found courage for a timid rap, and was let in and seized by the singer, put down in a chair, and told to keep quiet or she would be shaken. Hild was not unused to the violences of artistic nerves, and was not even surprised when, five minutes later, she was asked why in the name of all that was damnable she could not talk and keep one's mind off the awful failure that was coming. Hild's own nerves were not too steady, and she eventually made an escape. She found the stage alive with people laughing and singing in spite of Everett, who was everywhere trying to produce order, being himself in a condition of frenzy. Hild tried to get an idea of the effectiveness of the scene, but only its artificiality impressed her. The real wooden wash-tub in the center of the stage ridiculed the bare sides of the wings. In the rusty stove, which had seen honest service, there was an imitation

fire. Even the blue apron and red-flannel petticoat worn by the child reminded Hild of the satin gown and plumed hat in which the trained little creature had arrived half an hour before.

The men who had been experimenting with the lights stopped work. A prompter took his place near where Hild was standing. Hild could faintly hear the beginning of the overture, and a thrilling realization caught her up, every vein in her body responding. Jean, Jean! She said his name, with shining eyes where there were tears.

It seemed only a moment more before the curtain was rising, and the music swelling across the stage drawing Hild as if it had been magic. The delicate measures of the child's theme preceded Hild's appearance. She had only to look in at the window and say a few words which put the story in motion. Her cue came, and she was suddenly there before the limitless rows of faces, watching Jean's baton and feeling with sweeping emotion that she was singing to a house already won. As she made her exit Cavari entered, and she heard the rolling applause that greeted her. When the ovation was subdued Hild heard the high sure voice lift itself like a bar of light. As she listened she told herself with a voice that shook: "I never knew it was so lovely. I never knew he could do it."

She listened to the tender music of the scene between Hannah and the child, and heard it change to disturbance, and then to a low note of fear as Garry

tells of the approaching trouble. She could see nothing from where she sat, but she could hear everything. She knew by the peculiar theme when Brother entered, standing at the door. She followed every word and gesture of the actors in imagination, and with all her soul she listened to the applause that rose on the other side of the fallen curtain.

In Cavari's room five minutes later she found Jean being hugged, Cavari in tears of joy, and Everett shaking everybody by the hand. Hild had one short appearance in the second act, and her longest one in the last act, when she had to tell Hannah what Brother had done for her mother during the strike. She had to sing the words, "I feel that he is my brother, too. Every one feels this," and then her share was over.

The telling-power of the opera seemed to increase steadily, until the audience was so packed into a concentrated seeing and listening body that Hild, looking out and feeling this, was frightened. It seemed to her that the success of the thing was too complete, that it was impossible that it should go on to the end without some appalling disaster. She waited in panic while the second and third acts moved on smoothly. At the end of the third act a demonstration took place. Men stood up and shouted. Women snatched the roses they wore, or the violets, and flung them onto the stage. Jean and Cavari, appearing hand in hand, set the house storming upon them. Even Hild herself had to go

before the curtain, and, in the exuberance of the house, got her share of approbation. She glanced toward Hanbury's box to see his face, and was surprised to find that Marcia and some friends of Cavari's sat there alone. She supposed he must be waiting for them all in Cavari's dressing-room, but later, when she went there, he was not among those who surrounded the singer. She wondered at this, not liking it.

She had not thought to be frightened before, but now she began to dread her own appearance in the last act. When her cue came her feet stuck to the floor, while her head stuck nowhere, but swam as on vasty deeps. By some means unknown to herself she projected herself upon the stage, feeling herself a helpless point in a chaotic universe. Out of somewhere she saw Jean's baton wave, and then the hand of a prompter turning the leaves of his book. Words which had deserted her as birds desert an old nest came thronging back, and she opened her lips to them, singing, as she could hear, beautifully.

A few minutes later she was in her dressing-room, buttoning her blouse with fingers that missed everything. Jean had told her not to wait for the final tableau, and her soul was bent on haste, lest she should be delayed. She put on a small hat and raincoat, and sped on her way. She knew the etiquette of Percer's, and was not afraid to go there alone. She wanted to sit there in the familiar atmosphere—smoky, beery, but dear—and dream of that which had

actually taken place. She wanted to anticipate the moment when Jean should come to her, a Jean recognized, expressed, complete. Did a woman ever hurry with such a purpose before?

The opera had been long, and the street-cars were crowded, but Hild had no curiosity for the girls who swung by straps, shouting when a jolt of the car sent them into one another's arms, nor for the men of sheepish smiles and unaccustomed garments who were their escorts. She sat quietly in her corner, demure to look at, her heart in such a turmoil of excitement as one of these highly tuned young ladies would have found it hard to imagine. Her moment had come, and she had almost grasped it for her own. She was approaching in that jolting street-car everything toward which she had yearned and labored. Her small hat shaded a face that blushed to the thought. The glaring lights enveloped her, and the voices and metallic sounds of the night played about her, isolating her. She clung to her blue transfer ticket as if it were the key to paradise.

At Percer's she spoke a few words to a man in authority. She was waiting for Jean, she said. Might she be quiet and rest till he came? The man found her a place by the piano, partly sheltered from the room. She could see the tables and the gathering together of the curious crowd. Once they had seemed all alike to her, people of another and a lower world than her own. Now she could separate the different elements and classify them. She could see

an equal in the girl who sat with a man at a small table close to her, enjoying herself hugely, laughing loud and high, remembering, perhaps, a day of hard work before her on the morrow like the one behind. A couple next to them, silent and unamused, took their supper with a relish, and got up to leave when it was done. A group of young men came next, who ogled two girls at another table. A stolid workman called for a glass of beer and lingered over it, waiting for the show to begin. All the men smoked, and all the women talked and laughed. Every one drank beer and breathed out its heavy fumes into the heated atmosphere. Hild's thoughts grew incoherent and her body hot, as if it had been wrapped in some very fine warm stuff. But still Jean did not come.

The manager came to her once and asked her if she would not sing alone, but she shook her head. No doubt she might have to wait an hour longer, she reflected. She knewthat Jean might have great difficulty in getting away. She was not conscious of being tired.

It was about twelve that some one who came into the room brought exciting news. Every one who could get near enough listened to what he said with immense attention, even the jolly ones sobering when they heard. Hild did not care to move from her position of retirement, but as people separated to return to their tables she could gather from snatches of their talk that there had been a bomb-throwing somewhere in the East Side.

As it grew later the character of the crowd began to change. There was more noise, and the gaiety was of a different quality. Hild found herself constantly looking away from faces that leaned and peered. She could not see the dancer, but she could hear the laughter that commented upon her performance. There were songs which Hild did not understand. Men had descended into an enjoyment which made pouches of their cheeks and reddened their eyes. Women, not happy, Hild thought, but forgetful that they were not happy, laughed and looked and drank. Hild saw the men as beasts, the women as victims, and she closed her eyes. In the red darkness behind her lids she began to be afraid. The fear that met her there sent alarm messages along every nerve, until she tingled to it as to an electrical shock. She opened startled eyes and saw that a woman near her leaned heavily on the shoulder of a sailor who was beyond knowing that she was there

The watch at her belt told her that it was nearly two. Where was Jean, and what kept him?

Jean had told her to wait, and wait she would until he came or she had news of him. In any case, she was safer where she was than she would be crossing the room and going out alone. She looked toward the door in despair. As she did so a man entered and, seeing her, came rapidly toward her. She made her way between the tables to meet him. It was not Jean.

CHAPTER XXIII

UTSIDE Percer's Simeon Pierce helped Hild into a brougham and, giving an order to the footman, stepped in beside her. She understood with the swiftness of women that she must prepare for an upheaval of the prospect before her. The self-control learned in her dealings with her mother and Jean kept her silent as Simeon turned toward her.

"Kontze is all right," he said, "but I've got bad news for you, Hild, and that's a fact. It's awful!"

"Where is Jean?"

"Why—he's—you needn't be afraid. It'll turn out all right. Only there's a misunderstanding, and they've arrested him."

"Jean! But why?" Hild's utter astonishment

caught Simeon's attention.

"Honestly, don't you know?"

"Know? Has he got into a fight with somebody

about the opera?"

"No. The opera went like blazes. It all happened afterward. You must have known that he was mixed up with Hanbury and that lot."

"Why, of course! We know Hanbury. What

has he got to do with it?"

"Well— It's an awful pity you and Kontze had anything to do with him. That's a fact. You lived in the same house, too!"

"Yes. Is he arrested, too?"

"N-no. He's dead-or just as good."

"Dead? What do you mean?"

"What I say. Say, Hild, it's a go, and no mistake. All I know is, Hanbury got up and went out half-way through the evening and must have gone straight to the house where this fellow was. Nobody knows if he went to stop the business or what. They don't even know what the plot was. Anyhow, the bomb exploded, and this Gale or Rale—"

"Arthur Rale!" ejaculated Hild, convinced.

"You know him, too?"

"Why—" Hild stopped on the edge of her words. "Yes," she finished.

"Well, it was in his place the bomb was, and I can't make much out of the facts so far, but they look ugly."

"Was- What happened?"

"Rale was killed like a shot, and Hanbury stunned. They say he's dying. I was in the theater when Kontze was arrested, and I went along to give him advice. He told me to get you and take you to Mme. Cavari's."

"Where is Hanbury?"

"I don't know. Cavari rushed off right away. She's sure to be with him. I'm awfully sorry for her, Hild."

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"Yes."

"Look here, Hild. You'll let me run this case for you and Kontze, won't you? He seemed willing. I'd be awfully glad if you would."

"Why, of course. Only now I can't get it, any of

it, through my head."

"Never mind." He patted her head. "Never you mind! It'll be all right. I'd just like you to tell me, though—was your husband mixed up with this business?"

"Jean!" Hild's back straightened, and protests danced in her mind, not one of which she could tie to words. "Why, Jean," she stammered, chasing the elusive but never-to-be-questioned things, "he cares for nothing but his work. He hasn't an idea beyond that—he—doesn't believe in these things. Why, Arthur Rale would talk by the hour—"

Simeon turned a head.

"I mean—" Hild stopped upon a pause. "I'll tell you everything I know," she said, pitifully. "Simeon, you're not my enemy. You must believe me. You must! Jean couldn't harm any one. He is great, splendid, above things like that. I know, but I don't know how to tell you. You do believe me, don't you?"

"Why, yes, Hild; I do. And that's why I want you to let me handle the case first. A lot of lawyers wouldn't be convinced, you know, just because you believed a thing. But—well, I am. I said to myself right away: 'Hild's husband didn't do that.

He wrote the music, and he isn't a blackguard.' That's the reason I think I can do better for you than anybody else."

Hild did not answer, but, leaning back in her corner, let the rare lights play for seconds at a time over her set face and quiet hands. She looked fearfully at a heap of broken hopes, and winced as she might have done at the sight of a wound on the body of some one she loved.

At Cavari's door a servant met them. Mme. Cavari, she said, had telephoned to ask Mme. Kontze to go on at once to St. Edward's hospital. Hild, wondering, was tucked in once more, and the horses lifted drooping heads, their hoofs sounding sharply on the quiet pavement. Simeon was disturbed at this summons. They had not far to go and were expected, Simeon found on inquiry. A nurse took Hild in charge in the white light of the passage, and Hild followed her down corridors with shining walls and countless doors and odors like dreary words until they came to a threshold where they stopped. Tapping, and whispering to some one inside, the nurse motioned Hild to enter.

If some one else had lain on the high, narrow bed Hild would have been frightened, but Hanbury seemed to her suddenly as much himself dying as living. There were bandages about his high brow and under his chin, and closed eyelids showed. But he was there. A long thin hand lay pallid upon a sheet.

Hild saw him before she saw Nellie, who sat on the other side of the bed. There were no words. Hild never once thought of asking why she had been called to see this stranger die. She waited with the others, as if for a miracle.

The dawn was turning gray the shapes in the room. The nurse turned out a light. Nellie leaned closer, watching, and Hild looked to see if the sheet really moved over the low chest. As she looked there came a raising of heavy shoulders, a gasp, horrible to hear, a startled opening of glazing eyes, one swift look of consciousness straight upon Hild; and then, as she started forward as if she had been called, the face she leaned to emptied like an upturned glass, and doctors were there working, hastily, hopelessly, and a nurse brought a mirror that came unblurred away from blue lips.

There came confused moments, and one when Hild put her arms around Nellie and they leaned on each other.

"We had better go home and come back later?" Nellie asked the nurse, who nodded kindly.

The motor had replaced the brougham; and, driving toward Nellie's flat in the harsh morning brightness, Hild heard what afterward she thought she had always known.

"He was your father," Cavari told her. "I knew it—he told me on the night you met him just after your marriage. He was so lonely. I wanted him

to tell you. He never would. I think he felt that you would think of your mother's stories—you know she imagined a lot. But he would not have said that. He liked the way you pulled your marriage around. He spoke of that to me. He said you were succeeding. He hated failure. I'm glad he died. He had begun to see how little he could do. It would have driven him mad some day. He is better off where he is. But I am the loneliest woman on earth."

They separated to different rooms at Cavari's flat, but Hild could not sleep. An unreasoning longing for the country took her to the window, where smoke and shiny roofs rewarded her. Tragedy had come to her to sway her on to a trackless plane of sensation. It seemed unbelievable that she should ever again eat and sleep and mend her clothes. These things had no place in a life where people had fathers who died and husbands who were imprisoned. She looked over the housetops and thought of April at home.

At eight Cavari found her and made her come to breakfast. While they sat over their coffee and talked of Jean the papers were brought in to them. Fame and notoriety were certainly upon them all. From every morning sheet photographs of Jean, Hanbury, Rale, Cavari herself, stared, around which columns of type, large and small, dealt with the bomb-throwing, the brilliancy of the opera, the arrest of Jean, the deaths of Rale and Hanbury, the

beauty of Hild, the genius of Cavari, and elaborate details of the whole eventful night, most of them wrong and many fantastic. Hanbury, according to one paper, had died in the ambulance; another said his body had not been found; another that Mme. Cavari had insisted on taking him to his house in Seventy-fifth Street (it was a flat on Fifty-ninth).

One reporter had seen Hild clinging to her husband's neck while ruthless officers tore him away; another had had an interview with her at the Fulton Hotel; a third was informed that she was prostrated with grief. While they were still trying to find the grain of wheat in the chaff both telephone and door were bombarded. Cavari's lawyer called with Simeon and advised Hild as to a statement. She faced four or five reporters at once and told them, elaborately, nothing. Meanwhile Simeon and Alford were able to tell Hild and Nellie as nearly as possible all that was known of the bomb-throwing. Clearly young Rale had intended to do mischief, and it was thought that a certain body of anarchists was behind the plot. Jean had unfortunately been proved to have been with Rale considerably and to have been present with the boy at some meetings which had been of a suspicious character.

There had been other arrests in connection with the matter, and these men were sure to be convicted.

Why Hanbury had gone to Rale's rooms during the opera and what had passed between the men no one knew, but Rale had certainly tried to escape with

the bomb in a satchel, and in some way, by accident or design, the explosion had come. The house was partially wrecked, but no one else had been killed or seriously injured. The affair was mysterious, and they must solve the mystery far enough to free Jean of blame.

In the mean time the opera was a phenomenal success—advertised in a phenomenal way. Everett, in a state of flurry, called to bully the women into promising that they would not fail him that night. They made wax of his iron front by reassuring him at once, and had to submit to his picturesque blessings.

Later Simeon and Hild made their way into the old part of the city where the Tombs stands, symbolically placed, the center to which wretched streets lead. Hild was astonished when she arrived to find a crowd at the entrance waiting to see her. She did not know how to avoid the photographers. The formalities necessary before they were admitted chilled her. At last, however, they found themselves before a heavy door, and Jean sprang up to greet them.

"But is it not glorious?" he asked, seizing Hild by the arm. "Is it not magnificent? The world—she has come to her senses, and I—I have come into my

own."

Hild looked at the bare walls and the barred window; then she looked at Simeon, who was staring at Jean.

"It has come. I have hoped, I have starved,

feared, and despaired. And now I have arrived. I need no longer sing to the deaf. No. The world—her ears are open and she hears. The message I carry like a golden weight, precious but, oh, heavy on my heart, at last I am delivered of it. I am happy. There was never any one so happy as I. Last night I knew, but I could not believe; this morning I believe. It is the moment for which I have lived."

"The papers are full of it," said Hild, softly. "It is lovely, only, Jean, you know we've got to talk business."

"Business? Do we not talk business now?" Jean looked at Simeon. "Oh yes, I know. Mr. Pierce, he said much last night that I did not hear. I was occupied with important things. I do not very well understand why I am here. The policemen, they joke very much, but that did not help. It is not well that I should be locked up. It is very silly. Mr. Pierce, he knows a great deal. He must tell me how to get out. I had better understand. There are not very many chairs. Hild can sit on the bed."

Simeon had been busy early in the day looking into the charges against Jean. Of course there would be preliminary proceedings when, if Jean were committed for trial, they would try to get bail for him. Simeon intimated that there was little hope of clearing him without a trial, as feeling was very high in the matter.

Simeon drew out papers and began to put the case to Jean as clearly as he could, making notes as Jean answered a question here and there.

"Can you tell me anything in the way of proof that you had no knowledge of this business? You see, Colhart is a weak-minded boy, and he may con-

fess. You've got to provide for everything."

"I was a fool," Jean said, slowly. "It is clear. Hild—she said to me, 'Do not go so much to places with Arthur Rale.' I say, 'Do not trouble me.' I do not like trouble. No. I am made foolish. It is my lot. One must accept one's lot—but it is a pity. My lot it is to be a genius and foolish at once. Very well. There are things that are worse."

Simeon cast a look at Hild. She did not hesitate. "You did not know of this plot, Jean? Tell us that."

"Know? No, I did not. But I might have. I see that. My head was full of music. I saw Arthur Rale on that afternoon, and he talked strangely. I recall that. I might have known. But—if I were not a fool, should I be a genius? That is it!"

Before Hild left she had a word alone with Jean. She caught him by the sleeve and said, hurriedly: "Please say something that will comfort me. You don't know—you don't know—" She choked, and Jean looked down at her.

"Comfort? Do not be silly. Comfort is for those whose work is done—the dying and the idle! Do not ask me for comfort. Are you not my wife the

same? Have you not to do everything for me? Very well. Then do not talk about comfort."

That night the theater where the performance of Brother took place was bombarded by the half of New York that could afford a ticket. Everett said he had never seen such a house. A point had been stretched in the matter of standing-room, and a patient crowd waited from the first opening of the doors while the lucky holders of reserved seats filed in. The affair of the bomb-throwing and Jean's arrest, combined with the striking success of the opera itself, insured Brother such a "run" as even New York had never before witnessed. They would all be rolling in money long before the end of the season, Everett predicted.

Everett was in a state of distraction during the evening, fearing for Cavari's nerves, but the singer carried her part nobly to its close. Then, so tired as to be half dead, she went home with Hild, carrying all her flowers away to the quiet room where lay all that remained to her of her youth and happiness. Hild watched her arrange the flowers.

"I don't suppose he would understand," said Cavari, laying a red rose on the ebony of the coffin lid, "but there are a great many things he didn't understand. God will."

The following days brought the dreary funeral and the formal committing of Jean for trial. He was refused bail, as Simeon had feared he would be. Simeon worked hard to postpone the trial, knowing

that public feeling would be more favorable later on. In the mean time he was active in Jean's behalf. Hild had told him all she knew of the case, and Jean himself made it clear enough to Simeon that he was innocent of the charges against him.

To Hild the complete success of the opera had a bitter irony. She thought with envy of the early days of her marriage. An ingenious fate had disclosed to Hild the welding of her life in Jean's at the moment when division from his was menaced. She had lost her courage and could not regain it, but she struggled to disguise her weakness and did not fail. A piece of good fortune, which was really welcome to her, was the considerable fortune with which her father's will provided her. He had died at the moment when his securities were at high-water mark, and his lawyers were able to realize at once and hand to Hild some hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This enabled her to direct Simeon to engage the most capable legal assistance in the defense of Iean, which was, for the moment, all she cared about.

CHAPTER XXIV

NEW YORK never forgot that trial. Long before it came about public feeling had veered with the ease of a barometer needle from one extreme to the other. The immense popularity of Jean's music and the efforts of Jean's wife were factors in the change.

One by one the papers "came around" to Jean's side, and the selecting of the jury was made difficult by the partiality of the men. Even Hild came to feel that there was little chance of an unfavorable verdict. Simeon and Mr. Alford assured her that the acquittal was a practical certainty. Jean kept his serenity and his patience to a remarkable degree, and showed his shrewdness in the way in which he responded to his advisers' hints.

The matter of the trial once over, all surely would be plain sailing, thought Hild. There was no doubt about Jean's recognition as a musician. The symphonic poem which he had composed soon after Hild's return had been performed with enthusiastic receptions in Boston and New York and was to be given in London soon. Commissions were too numerous to execute. A famous dancer begged for a ballet. The fame which had been withheld so long

had come in generous proportions at last. Hild s money would make them independent, and Jean could work to every advantage. The days of hardship and poverty were over. Once free, he had only to reap a harvest of glorious things. It was the very completeness of the change in the aspect of their life that made Hild fear the unexpected.

Mrs. Emery had joined Hild early in the summer, and they had taken an up-town apartment where they could keep reasonably cool. Hild's mother had resumed all her old allegiance to Jean, and the two got on most happily in their rare meetings. Chloe Masterman had sailed in on Hild one day in June. She and her husband had extended their six months' honeymoon to a year, and Chloe's head was as full of fine sights as her trunks of gorgeous apparel. Oh yes, papa had forked out. He simply had to, you know. It was too ridiculous to ask them to get along on their allowance. It wasn't as if she was extravagant! Why, Alec's sister brought back nearly as many clothes as she did, and didn't even try to evade the customs. That was what Chloe called throwing away money! As for Alec, he was a regular fusser. He fussed over cab fares abroad, and now that they had a flat, he fussed over the electric light. As if you could see in the dark! Didn't Hild think that New York was awful? So crude after Europe. Only the women certainly did have good clothes! Hild listened patiently to such observations, but she was very glad when Chloe betook her-

self and her trunks to Narragansett. She heard from Simeon that Alec was busy in Wall Street and doing pretty well. "He runs down to see Chloe from Saturdays to Mondays," he explained. "I guess they'll get on all right."

Brother had run on far into the summer and was revived some weeks before Jean's trial took place. When the trial came on the theater and the courtroom were equally popular. The people who had seen Jean in the afternoon facing the charge of conspiracy went to hear at night the music which had made him so notable a figure. The people who had heard his music went to court to see the man who had produced it.

Hild understood little of the proceedings, but she well understood the temper of the crowd. She sat near Simeon during the giving of the evidence, listening closely to all that was said. The evidence for the prosecution was tedious, consisting mainly in proving Jean's connection with Rale. It was obvious to the most inexperienced that so far there was very little to base a charge of conspiracy upon. There was, however, more to come, and it was here that the unexpected justified Hild in expecting it.

The crowded room with its atmosphere of breathing humanity swayed in thick waves about Hild. She looked at Jean, who moved as she looked. He always stirred underneath her glance, as if he were subjectively conscious of it. His face was worn thin and fine from confinement and inactivity.

Could it be possible that in a few hours he would be free in a new world that had only generous welcome for him? Watching him, Hild let her thoughts sweep ahead to a moment when they should be alone and all the future theirs. Simeon, rustling some papers near her, wavered unreal, so intent she was upon focusing the prospect. Perhaps that was why she did not hear the clerk name the new witness. When she dropped upon the present once more Marcia Rale was in the witness-box in the act of taking the oath.

It was a surprise to see Marcia at all, for it was months since she had been visible to any of her friends. Hild had not speculated much as to her location. Her presence did not alarm Hild, but her failure to meet Hild's glance did. Even then she

had no suspicion of what was coming.

Asked to tell what she knew of Jean's relations with Rale and his connection with the plans of the preceding April, Marcia began her narrative, which from the first omissions from and additions to the truth, slight enough in themselves, went on through falsification of facts and circumstances until suddenly Hild saw—saw in the faces of the jury and the eyes of the judge, in Simeon's stir of alert attention—that a new light unfavorable to Jean was being thrown upon the case. For Marcia was slowly, painstakingly, consistently shifting upon Jean the suspicion of having incited Rale to violence. She described the beginning and the growth of their

intimacy, and her own gradual estrangement from her brother, corresponding in time with his friendship with Kontze and rumors which reached her of his connection with secret revolt. She repeated a part of Jean's first speech at the Artists' Club, and told her hearers of her brother's excited approval of it. She testified to Jean's frequent presence at meetings which Arthur would not allow her to attend. She went on to the afternoon of the fifteenth of April, when she had seen her brother for a moment. He had given her a ring which had been their father's, and had told her to keep it for him as if he were going into danger. Immediately afterward she had seen him go to Jean's room and leave the house in company with Jean and a rough-looking man. She had been alarmed enough to follow them, and had seen them enter Rale's place. Returning to the house later, she had seen Colhart, the boy now under arrest, coming out. She had gone to find Hanbury, hoping to secure his advice, but had not been able to get at him, and she had gone to the theater that night solely with the purpose of talking to him about her brother. At the end of the first act he had received a note, which he had handed on to her, and he had left the theater at once. The note would be submitted to the court for inspection.

The district attorney rose and read it aloud. "It is very badly spelled," he explained, "but the sense is as follows: 'There's trouble here. You better come. Jean Kontze knows. Young Rale's

going to Grand Central station ten o'clock. Guess he means hell.' It is not signed."

The noise that broke upon the scene deafened Hild. She turned eyes on Marcia that drew a glance, and the two encountered each other. When Hild withdrew from the onslaught she saw that Jean was talking rapidly to Simeon, and that Simeon nodded from time to time, intent on listening. Marcia's evidence was complete, and Simeon turned from Jean to put to her a series of sharp questions, which, however, shook her but little. With patience Simeon separated what she knew from what she imagined, but there remained the intimacy between Jean and Rale, the association with the group of revolutionists, as they called themselves, the incriminating circumstances of the afternoon, and the note. During the evidence against Colhart and Manahan it had appeared that a plot certainly had been formed for a bomb-throwing, and that Colhart and two other men, who had since disappeared, had met in Rale's rooms near the hour when Jean had been seen to go there in company with Rale and a stranger.

After Marcia's cross-examination the adjournment for the day was moved and the case for the prosecu-

tion was complete.

At the apartment Hild and her mother shared grave discussion between Hild, Simeon, and Alford lasted late. Together they went over the notes of Marcia's testimony. Here and there Hild was able

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to throw light upon it. In more than one place she could give evidence to greatly mitigate its effect. But there was no doubt that the case had taken a grim turn against Jean. Alford was shrouded in gloom, but Simeon seemed only stimulated by the danger of defeat. He said to Hild, privately: "I've got wind of something that may make 'em feel pretty sick. You just wait." And Hild was cheered.

"Do you think there would be any use in your seeing Miss Rale?" Mr. Alford asked.

"What use could there be in it?" asked Hild,

reddening.

"You were friends?"

"Yes and no. We were good enough friends in one way, but I never knew what she'd do next. I've just remembered. She told me not long ago that while I was away she went and offered to help Jean. I don't know why she did it. He refused. He never told me anything about it."

"Then he didn't tell you everything!" said Alford.

Hild flushed again.

"You don't understand a bit. He didn't tell me everything, that is true, just because things weren't important to him in the way they are to you and me. Just the same, I know more about Jean than most women know about their husbands. If you told me he had knocked a man down on the street corner I wouldn't dare say you were lying. That's the sort of thing he might do. That's his temper—it goes to

his muscles without ever getting near his soul. If you don't see what I mean you're awfully stupid. But his soul! Why, it's as big and fine as some of the cathedrals he's told me about, and once anything has a chance to pass through it it comes out right. That's the reason I know he couldn't any more plan anything wrong than I could kill a kitten. His thoughts are right, whatever his actions may be. And he isn't resentful. Why, things happen to him that would make you hard and bitter, but he—he never even speaks of them. I don't believe he ever thinks of them more than he has to. Just the same, he might swear at me if I boggled an accompaniment or dropped a plate. That's Jean."

"Hm! A character that may be fascinating to analyze, but really is not easy to defend, Mme.

Kontze."

"No, I suppose it isn't. But I don't care. It's the genius in him that won't be defended, because it's too splendid. I'll tell you who understood Jean, Simeon, Mert Massam. He's just a loafer in our town," she explained to Mr. Alford, "but he says awfully funny things sometimes, and he has such a funny way of saying them. He said to me the last time I was in Beverly: 'That Kontze! Try to talk about him—say rot! He's there, though. Can't git 'round it. Think 'bout it. Smoke a pipe on it. Don't talk 'bout it. Make doggone fool of yourself if you do. Can't make doggone fool of him nohow. Men fought in Civil War. Brave. You

bet. Think 'bout it, smoke pipe on it, but talk 'bout it? Put a statue up like the one in the Park—foolish-lookin' baby in nice uniform? Rot! Don't you talk 'bout Kontze, see?'"

The case for the defense opened on the following day with the testimony of Everett and others as to Jean's character. Mme. Cavari also appeared, able to give some assistance in a negative way to his cause. It was in Hild's evidence that the interest of the day centered. Her ordeal was not complete when court was adjourned. It seemed to her that Simeon was purposely prolonging it. She kept her head well during cross-examination on the third day, but she could not feel that the strength of the case against Jean was much diminished. She thought she read defeat in Alford's grave face and Simeon's averted eyes. Misery mauled her with vicious and ugly hands. It was then that she found that Jean was looking at her fixedly. They met with sudden completeness as she answered his look, in spite of a present which was a fear and a future like a threat. She was so deep in her moment that she did not hear what Simeon was saying, and only woke at the low laughter that ran like a suddenly loosened cord across the room. She turned her eyes to see Mert Massam in the witness-box.

His appearance meant little to her until Simeon had established the identity of the witness with the stranger seen with Jean and Rale on the afternoon of April 15th. Then the possible importance of his

testimony began to stir her to animation. Mert had given a push to the heavy attention of the court with his first words. There was a recovery, a more alert attitude, an easier settling of mental muscles. Laughter welled now and again to the surface. People could see that the sunlight had, of a sudden, invaded the sober precincts of the room.

Mert had come to his acquaintance with Jean,

which he announced in his own way:

"Allas liked him," he said, "doggone fool myself like most folks. He knows things here"—he tapped his chest—"an' fiddle 'em." In pantomime Mert sawed at an imaginary violin with an imaginary bow. "Other folks preach. Say 'Mert, ye lazy scamp, what ye doin' loafin' round my back yard?""

He was here interrupted and asked to keep to his point, whereat he winked at Simeon and continued:

"He don't preach. He fiddles. If I ever get to heaven—don't advise you to bet on it, sirs—I'll lie on my back an' listen to him. Golden harps won't be in it. You bet. That's why I come to New York to hear the opera. Had twenty-four dollars and fifty-four cents, mostly pennies. Gone now. Come on and went to his place. Found him there. Me! Played out! Rag! Him"—a thumb gesture again at Kontze—"he told me lie down on his sofy. Did. Woke up hearin' voices. Gal—that one."

Simeon interrupted with a "You can identify

later. Describe your people now."

"Wal, 'twas that one, anyhow. She's got hair

color of potato sacks and eyes the color of railroad rails, and she's not any too tall, and she's skinny. That 'nough, Sim?"

Simeon indicated that it was.

"That gal and a young feller they called Rale was in room. Purty soon Kontze says to me, says he: 'Mert, you come 'long with me 'n' this boy. He'll put you up.' Young Rale didn't look happy. Not much. We then went 'long. Not fur. Rale he took us to a room top of house. Kontze, he said, 'Have you no room on the earth, Arthur,' like that. Rale grunted. Like that. When we got to Rale's door a man opened it. Looked out. Rale grunted something couldn't hear. Kontze, down below, says, 'Who's that, Art,' sharp. Like that. Rale says, 'Nobody,' sulky, like that. We went farther up. Pretty soon Rale left us. Kontze, he says to me—"

Simeon interrupted:

"Speak louder and more slowly, please," he asked Mert.

The man continued, his ridiculous face oddly

dignified by earnestness:

"Kontze he says to me, says he, 'Mert, I want you to do something for me—yes. I want you to watch that boy to-night. There is something here I do not understand. He shakes my hand in a strange way. He has said lately many strange things. I do not like it. If that was Colhart I saw—I do not like it—no. If you think there is any trouble you must send to Mr. Hanbury, who will be at the

theater. You saw him to-day. He will know better than I what to do. Do not leave Rale for this night. He has promised to take you to the theater. Do not let him get away from you there. You understand?"

A quickening excitement sped from face to face in the room. Silence, held by force, was its expression. Mert went on to tell how he had obeyed Jean, that he had watched Rale during the evening and followed him surreptitiously when he left the theater before the curtain rose, that he had listened at his door and heard enough to alarm him. At last there sounded in the stillness, like a pebble dropped in a metal bowl, Simeon's question:

"Have you seen this note before?"

He held up the note Marcia had handed to the court.

"Can't rightly say I've seen it," said Mert, slowly. "Wrote it in the dark. Gave it to boy—"

"Repeat as nearly as you can what it says."

Mert recited the words.

"Why did you write 'Jean Kontze knows'?" Mert chuckled.

"Now, Sim, my writin' ain't very grand!"

"Well, no."

"Folks think a lot o' writin' and spellin'."

"Yes."

"Thought to myself, 'This feller 'll think doggone fool wrote that. Doggone fool don't know what he's writin'. Bumkum."

"Then you thought he might be impressed by Kontze's name and sent him a message, or possibly that Kontze might have spoken to Hanbury before and his name would be an assurance that you were his man?"

"Right!"

Mert went on to testify that he had met Hanbury in the corner, had told him the scattered words he had heard, and he had seen Hanbury run into the house. He, Mert, stood in the street waiting. He saw and heard nothing further until the explosion. He then "skedaddled," to use his own expression, and had gone home, whence he had been summoned two days later by Simeon's message.

Such was Mert's testimony. What followed was a keen attempt on either side to break down the evidence of the other. Mert's story never changed nor wavered. Alec Masterman was called as a witness to testify to Mert's character for truthfulness. The boy who had delivered the note also appeared. As Simeon declared, a dozen witnesses could be found in twenty-four hours to assure the jury that Mert never had been caught in a lie. The attorneys spoke, putting their cases before the jury and judge-Alford with passionate eloquence, the district attorney with cool zeal. The judge charged the jury, there followed half an hour, of all half hours in Hild's life the longest. When at last the jury filed in and the foreman rose to speak the knowledge of what he would say fired Hild's soul

before the words had left his lips. As one reads a telegram for which one has waited, knowing that if it came it could only say one thing, Hild heard the blessed words that pronounced Jean "not guilty." Then a curious thing happened. Mert Massam sat behind her within reach of her hand. She turned around and, putting two hands on his shoulders, she said:

"Oh, Mert, I do love you."

There was a happy riot in the room. At last Hild found herself near Jean, who was being shaken by the hand, while a succession of persons said foolish things to one another near him. It was long before they stood alone in the slanting sunlight at the door where Cavari's carriage waited for them. A crowd had gathered outside, and now set up such a cheering as lifts a man's heart to unfrequented heights. Jean it meant freedom-the waking from evil dreams which the soul is not free to combat; and it meant a larger freedom than that-freedom to the genius in him to find its home. He stood before them smiling, not, certainly, a splendid figure of a man, but a man, none the less, who was innocent and had suffered, who was great and had been ignored. And the people at the foot of the courthouse steps cheered as if they meant to make it all up to him in a minute. Perhaps they did.

CHAPTER XXV

THE house at that night's performance of Brother had that packed, vibrating sympathy, a readiness to understand, which acted on the players like some magic cordial. It had been given out that Jean, freed, would conduct the orchestra, and an ovation was prepared for him which took him by surprise, and told him by acclamation that his work was winged, his name a symbol. He himself, too, recent danger and hardship flinging him their dole, was a hero. A man who could do so much and was so much, caught hold of by publicity through no adroitness of his own, was swung upon a wheel of rapid events to a high niche in fame. American hearts responded. American hands applauded. We are not a people to grudge a man his triumph.

An enthusiasm embraced Hild as she appeared and, not understanding why, she bowed to clapping hands and raised faces. The opera swept on, forceful, spirited, tragic, tender, and sent its message home to hearts and minds fit to receive it. Other hearts and minds it disturbed; still others—there were few—it left indifferent.

When it was over Jean and Hild left the theater

together, avoiding the crowd. Jean found a hansom, and in the comparative quiet they jogged along, the frosty air on their cheeks and the stars, surely brighter than ever before, above.

"Aren't we going home?" asked Hild, as they

turned down Fourth Avenue.

"Home? No. At home there will be foolishness. There will be talk. You will see. I have that to say to you which is not talk. We will go to Percer's. They do not know there that we are famous. It is good to be famous. Yes. But it is not good to never forget it. We must forget it sometimes. Otherwise we cannot bend our minds to many things."

Not far from the restaurant they dismissed the cabby. Hild was plainly dressed, and Jean had changed his evening clothes for more familiar and

shabbier apparel.

If their fame had not spread to Percer's, Percer's had granted them a fame as its own special gift long before. They were asked almost at once to amuse the crowd. Hild smiled at Jean and nodded.

"But—my violin? You see, I can make music with many things, but with bare hands? No."

There was, however, a way, since there was a will, and an old man in a corner produced a violin, which Jean admitted was "Good, very good." So he played and Hild danced, and men clapped, over their beer, great hairy hands, free of glove; women tapped the tables and stamped their toes and nodded dirty ostrich plumes and home-made bows.

And then Jean and Hild had supper, as they often had had, at the greasy little table under the stage, and Hild scarcely knew what she ate or why she ate it, and everything vanished, except Jean's face, and then came back again, noisy and bright, showing under a veil of smoke. And later the starry night, surely never so bright, cooled her face, and she was following Jean through the streets—was it a dream? -between empty houses and full ones, down a narrow alley, through a court and up stairs that shook beneath her stumbling steps, cutting the darkness with her groping hand—into a room of memories. There were, she saw when Jean lighted the lamp, the same bed, the same chairs, but there were curtains at the windows and-wonderful-a fire of wood in a stove set near the chimney.

"Come here," said Jean. He took her hand and led her to her chair near the fire. He took her hat and jacket from her. He could see the quick breathing under the thin silk of her waist. The fire and the curtains meant so much! Otherwise the room was as bare as ever. And, oh-Hild kissed her hands to it—on the table lay Jean's violin!

He did not explain. He did not need to explain.

Why should he explain himself?

He sat down beside her, crossing his knees, and he took out his violin and began to play. He played until by sweet approaches he had laid hands on her soul. Then they began to talk to each other, she speaking from a mind held deliberately in place.

The night passed by them with averted face. He spoke to her of things that they would do.

"Freedom—she has come, and we will follow her. But, yes. Bondage we bore. It is over. Maybe it will come again. We shall not fear it. No, we shall fear nothing. To fear is to die. But, yes. I have seen it and I know. To fear—it is to refuse to be free. Hild, I told you long ago that to love you must be brave. A man, he must be brave to live; a woman, she must be brave to love. We have done it.

"I will tell you this, my woman who is brave, many things will come. We shall wander much, and we shall see much. But if we remember all that I have said it will all be beautiful as it is in my music.

"We shall see beautiful things, but we shall weary our bodies to find them. We shall know the best, but we shall have to endure the worst. You will cry sometimes, 'I am tired,' and I shall say, 'Go on. Is it your business to be tired? No.' I shall be cruel. Sometimes I shall hate you, sometimes I shall make you very sorry. That is not my business; my business is to live—yours is to love! And is it not enough? To-night would you not live through all things for another night like this? Is it not enough to love? I ask you."

"It is enough. Yes," said Hild.

"Then, remember that. If you think because fame has come, and money, the hard part is over, you are wrong. For every bar of music I write I

must live the equal. For every moment of life I must feel and suffer, and so must you. It is my glory—yes—and but for it life would be silliness, and I should leave it. I have brought you here because you will understand better here in this room. Yes? Am I not right?"

"Yes; I understand."

"So—understand it all, my little one, understand it all so that when your hair is white, white and soft and cherished more than now, you may be ready for all that is to come. You will be ready—but, yes; and one day you will uncurl your fingers—so—and give up to God what you have given up to me—you! You will not resist; you will not be very sorry; you will understand. It is the great thing to understand.

"But for now there is that which will make your heart sing. Sing, yes—to sob the more one day. But that is part of the understanding. You will bend your knees in thoughts of beauty carved in stone. You will talk with me, the petals of flowers touching your skirts everywhere, and the mountains, the color of mystery, about your head. You will look with me into the faces of the great and learn there how to meet the little life that is yours. And I—there will be times when I shall love you—oh, but love you, and give you all you wish. There will be times when my arms and your arms will be all the world; when your soul and my soul will meet, and there will be nothing between.

"And one more thing I will tell you, Hild. I will tell it to you, yes—and then I will look at your face and you must not turn it away. One day you will have a son—yes. And you will hold him in your two arms. And you will have paid your debt to Heaven, and you will be happy.

"There is still a thing to say; I can play it, yes, but words are hard. If I were what you call respectable I should wait till you are dead, and then I should put it, in bad rhyme, upon your tombstone. But, no, I am not respectable, and if you died I should not trouble about a tombstone. So I will say it to you while you put your arms around me—See, like this. Hild—it is true—I love you, my little one, and you are a good wife."

And in a moment, in the quiet of the night-locked city, he asked her:

"Is it enough?"

She answered with a sigh.





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